



# THE STORY OF WELLINGTON

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# THE STORY OF WELLINGTON

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**THE STORY OF NAPOLEON**

By HAROLD F. B. WHEELER,  
F.R.Hist.S. With 16 full-page Illustrations.

**THE STORY OF NELSON**

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# THE BOYS' WELLINGTON

*BY*

HAROLD F. B. WHEELER F.R.Hist.S.

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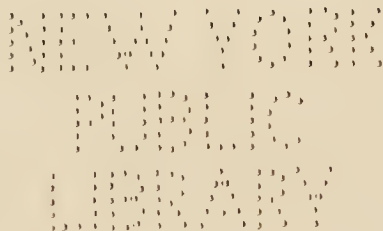
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'THE MAXIMS OF NAPOLEON' 'THE MIND OF NAPOLEON'

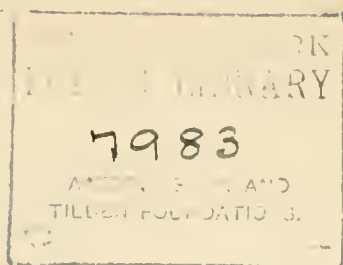
'THE STORY OF NAPOLEON' AND 'THE STORY OF NELSON'

*'For this is England's greatest son,  
He that gain'd a hundred fights,  
Nor ever lost an English gun'*

TENNYSON



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15

## MY LIFE-LONG FRIEND

*“Vera amicitia sempiterna est”*







# Foreword

**I**N this, the last of a trio of volumes dealing with three great contemporary men of action, I have attempted to tell the story, in its main lines, of the crowded life of Wellington. The narrative provides as substantial a view of Wellington as is possible within the limits of my space, but I hope that readers of my book will be so interested that they will go on to the perusal of its companions, for the careers of Napoleon, Nelson, and Wellington should be studied together. They are the three sides of a triangle of which Napoleon is the base.

The Duke's career, when compared to the others, is "a plain, unvarnished tale," not altogether devoid of romance, certainly not of adventure, but lacking in many of the qualities which have endeared less notable men. It would be obviously untrue to state that Wellington lacked humanity, but he was certainly deficient in that attractive personal magnetism so evident in Nelson. Speaking broadly, he did not repose that confidence in his subordinates which was one of the great sea-captain's most marked characteristics, and he often said hard things of the men under him. Nelson is "the darling Hero of England"; Wellington will always be known as the Iron Duke. If it ever became the fashion to canonize military and naval men, Nelson's nimbus would be of rosemary, Wellington's of steel. The mob never broke the windows of Merton Place, but it shattered every exposed pane in Apsley House. The incident arose from

his conscientious opposition to reform, and occurred in 1831, sixteen years after the battle of Waterloo. A little over a decade later, an immense mob cheered him as he proceeded up Constitution Hill. His acknowledgment was to point to the iron shutters of his house when he reached Hyde Park Corner. They had been put up after the bombardment by brickbats, and were never taken down during his lifetime.

In a way, Wellington is the typical John Bull of our fancy. He gloried in an open-air life, he enjoyed sport, he was a man wedded to duty, stern and uncompromising once his mind was made up. We love to imagine that the average Briton displays the same characteristics, although we know at heart that he does not do so, and that the secret of our material success as a nation is our extraordinary power of absorption, of "setting our sail to every passing breeze," of compromising provided we get the best of the bargain.

This is how the Duke appeared to a foreigner, the Duchesse de Dino, Talleyrand's niece: "He has a very exact memory, and never quotes incorrectly. He forgets nothing, and exaggerates nothing, and if his conversation is a little dry and military, it attracts by its fairness and perfect propriety. His tone is excellent, and no woman has ever to be on her guard against the turn that the conversation may take." In later years Wellington's memory failed somewhat. He was invariably precise, always a soldier, and never given to what is generally known as small talk. In a word, he commanded.

A more intimate and less familiar view of Wellington is afforded us in the diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, who painted the Duke's portrait at Walmer Castle in the autumn of 1839. During breakfast, he tells us, "six dear, healthy, noisy children were brought to the windows. 'Let them in,' said the Duke, and in they came, and rushed over to him, saying, 'How d'ye do, Duke? How d'ye do, Duke?' One boy, young Grey,

roared, 'I want some tea, Duke!' 'You shall have it if you promise not to slop it over me, as you did yesterday.' Toast and tea were then in demand. Three got on one side, and three on the other, and he hugged 'em all. Tea was poured out, and I saw little Grey try to slop it over the Duke's frock coat. Sir Astley [Cooper] said, 'You did not expect to see this.'

"They all then rushed out on the leads, by the cannon, and after breakfast I saw the Duke romping with the whole of them, and one of them gave his Grace a tremendous thump. I went round to my bedroom. The children came to the window, and a dear little black-eyed girl began romping. I put my head out and said, 'I'll catch you.' Just as I did this the Duke, who did not see me, put his head out at the door close to my room, No. 10, which leads to the leads, and said, 'I'll catch ye! Ha, ha, I've got ye!' at which they all ran away. He looked at them and laughed and went in."

That is a very human picture of the grim warrior when the sword had been put aside for ever and the smoke of battle was cleared. "I hit his grand, upright, manly expression," Haydon adds. "He looked like an eagle of the gods who had put on human shape, and had got silvery with age and service. . . . His colour was fresh. All the portraits are too pale. . . . 'Twas a noble head. I saw nothing of that peculiar expression of mouth the sculptors give him, bordering on simpering. His colour was beautiful and fleshy, his lips compressed and energetic."

From this passive scene in the evening of his days let us turn to the more stirring days of the storming of Badajoz for our final portrait of the Duke, for it is in the field that we like to remember him. The glimpse is afforded us by Robert Blakeney, one of the boy heroes of the Peninsular War. "I galloped off," he writes, "to where Lord Wellington had taken his station: this was easily discerned by means of two fireballs

shot out from the fortress at the commencement of the attack, which continued to burn brilliantly along the water-cut which divided the 3rd from the other divisions. Near the end of this channel, behind a rising mound, were Lord Wellington and his personal staff, screened from the enemy's direct fire, but within range of shells. One of his staff sat down by his side with a candle to enable the general to read and write all his communications and orders relative to the passing events. I stood not far from his lordship. But due respect prevented any of us bystanders from approaching so near as to enable us to ascertain the import of the reports which he was continually receiving; yet it was very evident that the information which they conveyed was far from flattering; and the recall on the bugles was again and again repeated. But about half-past eleven o'clock an officer rode up at full speed on a horse covered with foam, and announced the joyful tidings that General Picton had made a lodgment within the castle by escalade, and had withdrawn the troops from the trenches to enable him to maintain his dearly purchased hold. Lord Wellington was evidently delighted, but exclaimed, 'What! abandon the trenches?' and ordered two regiments of the 5th Division instantly to replace those withdrawn. I waited to hear no more, but, admiring the prompt genius which immediately provided for every contingency, I mounted my horse."

I shall not attempt to enumerate the lengthy list of authorities I have consulted in writing this volume, but special mention must be made of Professor Oman's monumental "History of the Peninsular War," which corrects Napier in many important points. Four volumes have now been published, and I am under obligation to the eminent scholar whose name appears on the title-pages for his kindness in allowing me to use without reserve the labour of many years. The "Cambridge Modern History" (vol. ix.), Rose's "Napoleon," Croker's "Correspondence and Diaries,"



## Foreword

II

Siborne's "Waterloo Letters," the "Lives" of Wellington by Sir Herbert Maxwell, W. H. Maxwell, Gleig, Hooper, Yonge, and many others have been laid under contribution, as well as contemporary works by soldiers who fought with the Iron Duke. As I have endeavoured to let Wellington speak for himself whenever possible, Gurwood's "Dispatches" have been frequently consulted, and for sidelights I have had access to a large number of volumes of correspondence, autobiography, and biography in which he plays a part, however insignificant.

Finally, I must express the hope that my readers, as they progress over the field which I have endeavoured to open up to them, will share the love of the strong, silent Man of Duty which has grown upon me as I have become more intimate with the story of his life.

*The path of duty was the way to glory.*

*His work is done.*

*But while the races of mankind endure,*

*Let his great example stand*

*Colossal, seen of every land.*

HAROLD F. B. WHEELER

NORTHWOOD, MIDDLESEX.





# Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY (1769-93) . . .	17
II. WELLINGTON'S BAPTISM OF FIRE (1794-97) . .	28
III. THE CAMPAIGN OF SERINGAPATAM (1797-1800) . .	35
IV. WAR WITH THE MARHATTÁS (1801-3) . . .	47
V. LAST YEARS IN INDIA (1803-5) . . . . .	58
VI. SERVICE IN ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND DENMARK (1805-7)	68
VII. THE FIRST BATTLES OF THE PENINSULAR WAR (1808) .	76
VIII. VICTORY ABROAD AND DISPLEASURE AT HOME (1808-9) .	90
IX. SIR ARTHUR'S RETURN TO PORTUGAL (1809) . . .	99
X. TALAVERA (1809) . . . . .	110
XI. WELLESLEY'S DEFENCE OF PORTUGAL (1809-10) . .	119
XII. THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS (1810) . . .	128
XIII. MASSÉNA BEATS A RETREAT (1810-11) . . .	137
XIV. THE SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO (1811-12) . . .	154
XV. BADAJOZ AND SALAMANCA (1812) . . . . .	165

# 14      The Story of Wellington

CHAP.	PAGE
XVI. THE CLOSING BATTLES OF THE PENINSULAR WAR (1812-14)	181
XVII. THE PRELUDE TO THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN (1814-15)	200
XVIII. LIGNY AND QUATRE BRAS (1815) . . .	210
XIX. WATERLOO (1815) . . . . .	218
XX. WELLINGTON THE STATESMAN (1815-52) . . .	236
INDEX . . . . .	253
MAPS—	
(1) WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS IN INDIA . . .	37
(2) WELLINGTON'S PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS . . .	77
(3) THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO . . . . .	219

# Illustrations

	PAGE
THE DUKE WRITING HIS WATERLOO DISPATCH ( <i>Lady Burghersh</i> )	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ARTHUR AND THE MARQUIS DE PIGNEROL (George W. Joy)	20
"THE FULL FORCE OF THE BLAST" . (Thomas Maybank)	32
"HE WAS HURLED DOWN BY THE DEFENDERS" (Thomas Maybank)	54
SIR HARRY SMITH AND THE SPANISH PATRIOT (Thomas Maybank)	82
THE GALLANT PIPER AT VIMIERO . (Thomas Maybank)	92
"YOU ARE TOO YOUNG, SIR, TO BE KILLED!" (Thomas Maybank)	128
THE RETREAT FROM COIMBRA . . (Thomas Maybank)	138
WELLINGTON AT BADAJOZ CONGRATULATING COLONEL WATSON (R. Caton Woodville)	168
THE END OF BREAKFAST . . . (Thomas Maybank)	172
CHARGE OF PAKENHAM'S THIRD DIVISION AT SALAMANCA (R. Caton Woodville)	178
FLIGHT OF THE FRENCH THROUGH VITTORIA (Robert Hillingford)	190
THE FRENCH RETREAT OVER THE PYRENEES (R. Caton Woodville)	198

# I 6      The Story of Wellington

	PAGE
FARM OF MONT ST JEAN	
CHÂTEAU OF HOUGOUMONT	
LA BELLE ALLIANCE INN	
FARM OF LA HAYE SAINTE	
	( <i>Photographs by C. A. Hamilton,</i> <i>Hornsey</i> )
	222
THE DESPERATE STAND OF THE GUARDS AT HOUGOUMONT	
	( <i>R. Caton Woodville</i> )
	226
CHARGE OF THE SCOTS GREYS AT WATERLOO	
	( <i>R. Caton Woodville</i> )
	234

# The Story of Wellington

## CHAPTER I

### The Fool of the Family (1769-93)

*"I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur."*

LADY MORNINGTON.

GATHERING clouds, dark and ominous, obscured the political horizon in the year 1769. The habitués of London coffee-houses discussed one of three things—"The Letters of Junius," the most remarkable series of political exposures ever penned; the election of the notorious John Wilkes for Middlesex; and the rebellious conduct of the North American colonists. On the other side of the Channel the Duc de Choiseul was skilfully planning ways and means of fanning into a fierce outburst the flames of discontent now flickering in the West. To heap coals of fire on the country which, during the Seven Years' War (1756-63), had enforced her claims to Canada and India, would be a triumph worthy of the statesman who had banished the Jesuits from the hereditary possessions of Louis XV.

Had the people who lived in those stirring times been gifted with the power of penetrating the future, their eyes would have turned in the eventful year of 1769 from the larger stages to the comparatively insignificant

## 18      The Story of Wellington

islands of Corsica and Ireland, for the former was the birthplace of Napoleon and the latter of Wellington, and both were born in 1769.

There are other remarkable coincidences connected with the childhood of Napoleon and Wellington. Their respective fathers were easy-going, unpractical men, their mothers were women of marked force of character, left widows early in life with large families. In addition, the hero of Austerlitz was the fourth child of Letizia Bonaparte, his conqueror at Waterloo the fourth son of the Countess of Mornington.

A certain amount of obscurity is associated with their juvenile days. Although the date of the entrance into the world of "the little Corporal" is now fairly well established, it was long before historians ceased to discuss it. There is still much uncertainty as to that of Wellington. The Duke was always vague on the point, and celebrated his birthday on the 1st May, which is the day following that on which he was baptized at St Peter's, Dublin, presuming the parish register to be correct.<sup>1</sup> Lady Mornington announced that Arthur was a May-day boy, but her nurse as stoutly maintained that the event took place on the 6th March. Dangan Castle, West Meath, and Mornington House, Marion Street, Dublin, contest the honour of being his birthplace. The witness for the country home is the afore-mentioned nurse; a prescription of the physician who attended Lady Mornington about the period was sent to a chemist in Ireland's capital, and attests the claim of the town mansion. The matter is not of prime importance, but serves to show the somewhat casual habits of a less practical generation than our own.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell in his "Life of Wellington" (p. 2) suggests that the confusion arose owing to the then comparatively recent alteration of the calendar. Supposing Arthur Wellesley was born on the 1st May (new style), that date would be the 18th April (old style), and the 30th April (old style) the 12th May according to the present way of reckoning.



The real family name of the Westleys, Wesleys, or Wellesleys—the different forms were all used—was Colley or Cowley, but the Duke's grandfather inherited the estates of his kinsman, Garret Wesley, on condition that he assumed that surname. He became Baron Mornington in 1747. It was the son of this fortunate individual, also a Garret, who was created the first Earl of Mornington in the year previous to his marriage to the eldest daughter of Viscount Dungannon. They became the parents of the future Duke of Wellington as well as of several other children.

Of Arthur Wellesley's scholastic career little can be ascertained with certainty. We know that he spent a little while at a preparatory school in Chelsea, then a very different place from what it is now, and that he and his eldest brother, Lord Wellesley, who had succeeded his father on his sire's death in 1781, were at the same house at Eton. Unfortunately the two rooms which they occupied are now demolished. While it would be incorrect to call Arthur a dull boy, he certainly displayed little interest in learning. Indeed, his mother was so cynical regarding his ability, or want of it, that she called him "the fool of the family."

The dictum that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton may have been true so far as other officers were concerned, but the younger Wellesley showed not the slightest interest in games. He preferred the fiddle to cricket, for he inherited his father's passion for music. "I was a player on the violin once myself, sir," he mentioned to an acquaintance in after years, "but I soon found that fiddling and soldiering didn't agree—so I gave it up, sir! I gave it up!" He was a great admirer of Handel's compositions.

One precious anecdote regarding his life at the famous public school has been spared to posterity, and appropriately enough it is a record of his first serious fight—not with a sword, but with fisticuffs. Robert Smith, brother of Sydney Smith, the witty divine and

essayist, happened to be bathing in the river when Wellesley was passing. Prompted by some evil or jocular spirit the latter picked up a handful of small stones and began to pelt his fellow student. Smith yelled that he would thrash him if he did not stop. Wellesley defiantly dared him to do so. The enraged "Bobus" promptly waded out and accepted the challenge, which he regretted before many rounds had been fought.

Although Wellesley was by no means of a pugnacious disposition, a second fight, in which he was not victorious, took place during a holiday spent at the Welsh home of his maternal grandfather, Lord Dungannon. His opponent was a young blacksmith, named Hughes, who lived to hear of the mighty exploits of the Iron Duke. He was never tired of telling how he once conquered the vanquisher of Napoleon. It was his one title to fame.

After leaving Eton, Wellesley was taken to Brussels in 1784 by his mother, who found the many attractions of London society a heavy tax on a slender purse, for she had removed to the Metropolis on the death of her husband. As her son seemed to take little or no interest in anything but the army, and as that service was then considered a desirable alternative to the Church for the fool of the family, Lady Mornington accepted the offer of some friends to provide for his military education. Whatever ability her fourth son displayed seems to have been less obvious to her than to others, as frequently happens. "They are all," she writes with reference to her family, "I think, endowed with excellent abilities except Arthur, and he would probably not be wanting, if only there was more energy in his nature; but he is so wanting in this respect, that I really do not know what to do with him." However, the youth whom she described as being "food for powder and nothing more" was packed across the frontier to Angers. She herself returned to London in 1785, Wellesley proceeding to

the quaint old town associated with King John of England. Here he had his first encounter with the French, and there is a celebrated picture showing him in conversation with the Marquis of Pignerol.

Pignerol, who presided over an Academy, not exclusively devoted to the training of would-be soldiers as some writers have assumed, was an engineer officer, and did his best to initiate the Irish lad into some of the mysteries of the science of war. As his pupil only remained at Angers for about twelve months, he cannot have learned more than the rudiments, but he assimilated French with comparative ease. Unlike Napoleon, who was never happier than when he was poring over military books at Brienne, Wellesley enjoyed much good society. He made the acquaintance of the Duc de Brissac, who seems to have been a delightful foster-father of the scholars, for he frequently entertained them at his château. The Duc de Praslin, the Abbé Siéyès, later one of the French Consuls, D'Archaubault, Talleyrand's brother, Jaucourt, who afterwards became Secretary for Foreign Affairs under Louis XVIII, were all on his visiting list. It is quite probable that among his schoolmates was Chateaubriand, destined to fill an honoured place in the world of letters, but of this, said the Duke, he was not absolutely certain.

The British army was not then the skilfully organised fighting-machine it has since become. Entrance into its ranks as an officer was not difficult, provided one had financial support and influence. This explains the rapid promotion of Wellesley. At the age of seventeen he began his military career as an ensign in a Foot regiment, his gazette being dated the 7th March 1787. Nine months later he was promoted lieutenant into the 76th. By successive steps he rose to be captain (1791), major (1793), lieutenant-colonel (1793), and colonel (1796). A colonel at twenty-seven is beyond the dreams of mortal men to-day, and this advancement



contrasts oddly with the slow progress of Nelson, Wellesley's great naval contemporary, who had to depend upon his own unaided merits for promotion. In 1793, six years following his first appointment, he was placed in command of the 33rd Foot, after having experience of the cavalry by serving in both the 12th and 18th Light Dragoons.

A little influence went a long way in those casual times; there was nothing so valuable as "a friend at court." Unlike many aristocratic nobodies who secured high position, Wellesley afterwards proved his worth, but he scarcely would have ascended the military ladder with such astonishing quickness had not his brother Richard held office under the younger Pitt. Lord Westmorland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, also took a fancy to him and made him one of his *aides-de-camp*.

In 1790, when he was still in his twenty-first year, he entered the Irish House of Commons as Member of Parliament for Trim, County Meath, a "pocket borough" of the Wellesley family. We are told by Sir Jonah Barrington, who made his acquaintance some three years later, that the young soldier "was then ruddy-faced and juvenile in appearance, and popular enough among the young men of his age and station. His address was unpolished; he occasionally spoke in Parliament, but not successfully, and never on important subjects; and evinced no promise of that unparalleled celebrity and splendour which he has since reached, and whereto intrepidity and decision, good luck, and great military science have justly combined to elevate him." The same authority then proceeds to introduce us to Lord Castlereagh, and adds: "At the period to which I allude, I feel confident nobody could have predicted that one of those young gentlemen would become the most celebrated English general of his era, and the other one of the most mischievous statesmen and unfortunate ministers that has ever

appeared in modern Europe.<sup>1</sup> However, it is observable that to the personal intimacy and reciprocal friendship of those two individuals they mutually owed the extent of their respective elevation and celebrity: Sir Arthur Wellesley never would have had the chief command in Spain but for the ministerial manœuvring and aid of Lord Castlereagh; and Lord Castlereagh never could have stood his ground as a minister, but for Lord Wellington's successes."

Another contemporary tells quite a different story of Wellesley's ability, and as he also heard him in 1793 it is printed here in order that the reader may not be prejudiced by Barrington's opinion. So much is determined by the point-of-view of the witness. The occasion was a debate on the perennial question of the Roman Catholics. Captain Wellesley's remarks, we are told, "were terse and pertinent, his delivery fluent, and his manner unembarrassed." Gleig, who was intimately acquainted with the Duke, says that he "seems to have spoken but rarely, and never at any length. His votes were of course given in support of the party to which he belonged, but otherwise he entered very little into the business of the House." He mentions but one incident connected with this period, namely, Wellesley's attachment to the Hon. Catherine Pakenham, an acknowledged Society beauty and a daughter of Baron Longford. His Lordship, possessing a keen eye for the practical affairs of life, objected to the match on the score of lack of money, but there is little doubt that the couple came to a mutual understanding.

That Wellesley took more than a casual interest in his

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that Barrington wrote from the point of view of a "patriot," and that Castlereagh had much to do with the Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Castlereagh entered the Irish Parliament in 1790, served in the Pitt, Addington, Perceval, and Portland ministries, was present at the Congress of Vienna, and died by his own hand in 1822.

## 24      The Story of Wellington

military duties is evident, and if he did not display the inherent genius of Napoleon he certainly went about his duties in a highly commendable and workman-like manner. For instance, he had scarcely donned the uniform of his first regiment before he entered into calculations regarding the weight of the accoutrements, ammunition, and other paraphernalia carried by a private when in marching order. For this purpose he ordered a soldier to be weighed both with and without his trappings.

“I wished,” he says, “to have some measure of the power of the individual man compared with the weight he was to carry and the work he was expected to do. I was not so young as not to know that since I had undertaken a profession I had better endeavour to understand it.” He adds, “It must always be kept in mind that the power of the greatest armies depends upon what the individual soldier is capable of doing and bearing,” a maxim which still holds good, notwithstanding the many changes effected in the course of a century and a quarter. However excellent the gun, it is the man behind it which determines the issue.

It was not until 1794 that Wellesley underwent the hardships of active service. Before that phase of his career is detailed we must make a hasty and general survey of the wide and scattered field of action. The occasion was the second year of the great strife which occupied the attention of Europe, with little intermitance, for over twenty years. The gauntlet had been flung down by France in 1792, when war was declared against the Holy Roman Empire, with which Prussia made common cause. The campaign was an eye-opener to all Europe, for although the Prussians and Austrians began well they did not follow up their advantages, particularly when the road to Châlons and Paris lay open to the former. At Valmy the Prussians were defeated, and subsequently withdrew



across the frontier in a deplorable condition of dearth and disease. Dumouriez then invaded Flanders, and was victorious over the Austrians at Jemappes, a success followed by the fall of Mons, Malines, Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, and Namur, while smaller towns, such as Tournay, Ostend, and Bruges welcomed the victorious troops with open arms as the heralds of a new era.

In Savoy the scanty Sardinian forces were routed by Montesquiou, and the country annexed, as was Nice by Anselme. With the dawning of 1793 Belgium shared a similar fate, and the occupation of Dutch territory was decided on. This latter was an extremely foolish move, as events soon proved.

England and Holland became involved in the second month of the new year, when the French Convention announced hostile intentions to both Powers. Previous to this, Great Britain had maintained a strict neutrality. She now commenced proceedings by sending 10,000 troops to Holland under the incompetent Duke of York, where they united with a similar force of Hessians and Hanoverians, whose expenses were met by English gold, a plentiful supply of which also found its way into the coffers of other Powers. The Island Kingdom and Russia had already allied themselves, although the Czarina's designs on Poland precluded immediate co-operation, and during the next few months Sardinia, Spain, Naples, Prussia, the Holy Roman Empire, and Portugal joined in mutual support.

Dumouriez duly appeared on Dutch territory, but was compelled to retreat on Flanders by the defeat of the general engaged in besieging Maestricht. On resuming offensive operations he himself lost the battle of Neerwinden. Within a fortnight the French had abandoned all their conquests in Belgium, which again passed into the possession of Austria. Dumouriez took refuge in the camp of the Imperialists after negotiating with Coburg, the commander of the "White

## 26      The Story of Wellington

Coats," to place the frontier fortresses into his hands and to unite the two armies. Neither arrangement was carried through, for the defeated general found it more prudent to fly the country.<sup>1</sup> Mayence, on the Rhine, was invested by the Prussians, to whom it eventually capitulated, and Valenciennes and Condé were successfully besieged by the Austrians and British. All three fortresses fell during July 1793.

The tide was beginning to turn even in France, for Toulon and Lyons openly revolted, and civil war broke out in La Vendée. Had the Allies made a concerted effort, the defeat of the Republican cause could scarcely have failed to follow, but they quarrelled amongst themselves instead of following up their advantage. They squandered their strength by dividing their army into detachments, and much precious time was wasted by the diversion on Dunkirk made by the English, Hanoverian, Hessian, and some of the Austrian forces, about 37,000 strong.

The Revolutionary Government, augmenting its fighting body, instructed General Houchard to attack the enemy before the historic seaport. As a sequel to this movement the Duke of York was forced to retreat and abandon forty guns and much of his baggage. Houchard's triumph was short-lived. He met with disaster at the hands of the Austrians, and paid the price of failure with his head. With the Convention defeat spelt death. Professing the Cause of Humanity, it refused to be humanitarian.

By the middle of September all the important fortresses which blockaded the way of the Allies to the Capital had fallen, with the exception of Maubeuge. The victory of Jourdan, the successor of Houchard, over the covering force at Wattignies saved the situation, and on the 17th October the French marched into

<sup>1</sup> Dumouriez was in London from the 12th June until the 22nd, 1793. He lived in England from October 1803 until his death on the 14th March 1823.

## The Fool of the Family 27

Maubeuge. On the Upper Rhine the Allies found themselves in possession of Metz only, at the end of 1793. In the south-west of Europe the campaign made no further progress, and the Republican cause gained fresh impetus by the crushing of the royalist risings at Lyons and Toulon. It will be remembered that Napoleon won his first laurels in helping to subjugate the great arsenal in the south of France, and in forcing the withdrawal of the British fleet under Hood which had gone to support the rebellious inhabitants.

These facts, dry as dust though they may be, are essential to a correct understanding of the part played by Wellington in the early days of the Great War detailed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER II

# Wellington's Baptism of Fire

(1794-97)

*"I learnt what one ought not to do, and that is always something."*

WELLINGTON.

THE pages of military romance teem with references to the disappointed lover who seeks to assuage his sorrow by active service. In actual life one doubts whether such things often happen, but it appears that it was true of Arthur Wellesley. He asked his eldest brother to use his influence with Pitt to persuade Lord Westmorland to send him "as major to one of the flank corps," his own regiment being "the last for service." The request was refused, and the young officer had to wait until May 1794. Orders were then issued for the 33rd to proceed on foreign service as part of a contingent under Lord Moira which was urgently required to reinforce the Duke of York.

The Allies had not only experienced a series of defeats, but Prussia had withdrawn many of her forces on the Rhine for service in Poland, the dismemberment of which seemed to offer more tangible advantages than the protracted warfare against "armed opinions." As a member of the Holy Roman Empire she had of necessity to supply 20,000 troops—a mere handful—and she announced her intention of merely fulfilling this obligation. Again British gold came to the rescue,



## Wellington's Baptism of Fire 29

and Prussia, by a treaty signed on the 19th April 1794, agreed to keep 62,000 men at the disposal of the Allies in return for a handsome subsidy. The unfortunate Austrian general, Mack, was then given command of the new campaign. The fatal mistake was repeated of dividing the army, with the result that while the Imperialists under Clerfaut were forced to retreat on Tournay, the Duke of York, aided by Prince Schwartzenberg, secured an advantage at Troisville. A series of actions around Tourcoing followed on the 16th to the 18th May, during which his Highness narrowly escaped being made a prisoner, owing partly to his having been left isolated by the cutting off of his communications, and partly to a praiseworthy determination to hold the positions his troops had gained. At Pont-à-chin, near Tournay, the repeated attempts of Pichegru to secure the village ended in disaster. On the 26th June the Austrians, in their endeavour to relieve Charleroi, which had surrendered to the growing forces of the French under Jourdan a few hours before, were forced to retreat from the plains of Fleurus. "The loss of Flanders," says Alison, "immediately followed a contest which an enterprising general would have converted into the most decisive triumph." The Duke of York, having sustained a reverse at Oudenarde, was also retreating, intent upon covering Antwerp and Holland.

Wellesley arrived at Ostend with his regiment in June 1794, from whence he was sent to Antwerp, on which the Duke of York and the Prince of Orange shortly afterwards fell back, while Moira marched to Malines. The Colonel held that his senior officer would have been better advised had he and his troops proceeded up the Scheldt or the Maes in boats, an opinion subsequently confirmed by events.

After settling necessary matters Wellesley carried out his instructions and reached the Duke of York several days before Moira was in touch with him. It

was a moral victory for the young officer, and doubtless served the very useful purpose of stimulating his ambition.

For three months the Duke of York and the Prince of Orange remained at Antwerp. The Commander of the Dutch troops then retired towards the Rhine, and the former moved towards Holland. During the march General Abercromby was told to secure the village of Boxtel, captured on the previous evening by one of Pichegru's divisions. A desperate affray ensued, and notwithstanding the intrepid bravery of the British infantry, cavalry, and artillery, it ended in disaster. It is extremely probable that the entire force would have been annihilated but for Wellesley's promptitude in covering the retreat. No opposition was offered until the British were passing through a wood, when a masked battery opened fire. A little later there was considerable confusion, and a body of French Hussars charged forward only to meet Wellesley's battalion drawn across the road. They were repulsed, thanks to the valour of the young commander.

Throughout an extremely severe winter the British were continually pressed by the ardent Republicans. From October to January 1795 Wellesley held a post on the Waal, and the arduous nature of his duties is described by him in letters written at the time. "At present," he says on the 20th December 1794, "the French keep us in a perpetual state of alarm; we turn out once, sometimes twice, every night; the officers and men are harassed to death, and if we are not relieved, I believe there will be very few of the latter remaining shortly. I have not had the clothes off my back for a long time, and generally spend the greatest part of the night upon the bank of the river, notwithstanding which I have entirely got rid of that disorder which was near killing me at the close of the summer campaign. Although the French annoy us much at night, they are very entertaining during the daytime; they are perpetually chattering with our officers and

## Wellington's Baptism of Fire 31

soldiers,<sup>1</sup> and dance the *carmagnol* upon the opposite bank whenever we desire them; but occasionally the spectators on our side are interrupted in the middle of a dance by a cannon ball from theirs."

It is a genial, good-natured message, but Wellesley always held his feelings well under control. In the above he chose to reveal the humorous aspect of the long-drawn-out agony. There was plenty to complain about had he desired. The food supply was deficient; the wounded had to bear their agonies with the patience of Stoics, because the stock of medicines ran short; and the general privation was terrible. A pitiful lack of foresight characterised the whole campaign. What could be expected of a Commander-in-Chief who gave preference to the pleasures of the table if a dispatch arrived during a meal, and contemptuously remarked, "That will keep till the morning"? During the time of his sojourn on the Waal, Wellesley "only saw once one general from the headquarters,<sup>2</sup> which was old Sir David Dundas. . . . We had letters from England, and I declare that those letters told us more of what was passing at headquarters than we learnt from the headquarters ourselves. . . . It has always been a marvel to me how any of us escaped."

That "old Sir David Dundas" thought very highly of the young officer's conduct is evident. When he succeeded as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, on the recall of the Duke of York in the following December, Wellesley was appointed Brigadier and given command of the rear guard. By a series of retreats the tattered army eventually reached Bremen. It embarked for England early in 1795.

In summing up Wellesley's first experience of field service, Earl Roberts states that it was, "no doubt,

<sup>1</sup> Similar incidents occurred during the Peninsular War.

<sup>2</sup> At Arnheim, on the Rhine, less than twenty-five miles distant. According to the de Ros MS., consulted by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Dundas paid a visit to Wellesley "about once a fortnight."



## 32      The Story of Wellington

extremely valuable to Wellington in after years. It must have taught him that soldiers even of the best quality, well drilled, disciplined and equipped, cannot hope to be successful unless proper arrangements are made for their supply and transport; and unless those who direct the operations have formed some definite plan of action, and have sufficient zeal and professional knowledge to carry it out. If the French generals had taken full advantage of the opportunities which the incapacity of the English and German commanders threw in their way, the British force must have been annihilated."

One is inclined to doubt whether the troops were "well drilled, disciplined and equipped" at this period. The gross incompetence of many of the highest officers is abundantly proved, and continued lack of success speedily reduces the vital strength of any regiment.

As already noted, the commissariat was execrable. We have it on the authority of one who was present that during the retreat hundreds of invalids succumbed, "whilst the shameful neglect that then pervaded the medical department, rendered the hospitals nothing better than slaughter-houses for the wounded and the sick."

Shortly after Wellesley reached England he decided to leave the Army. The cause is unknown, but it seems highly probable that either his recent experience had disgusted him with the service as constituted, or he wished to obtain more remunerative employment so that he might be in a position to marry the lady of his choice. He also owed money to his brother, who had made advances for his promotion. This sum could be repaid by the sale of his commission. Although Wellesley was always scrupulous in money matters, the reason seems scarcely credible. We are therefore forced to accept one of the other alternatives, perhaps both, for mention is made of the miserable state of the



“The full force of the blast”

Thomas Maybank

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ASTOR, LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

Army in his letter to Lord Camden<sup>1</sup> regarding the desired appointment. He consulted Mornington on the matter, and it was decided that a position under the Revenue or Treasury Boards would serve his purpose. "If your Excellency," he writes to the Viceroy, "is of opinion that the offices at these boards are too high for me, of course you will say so; and as I am convinced that no man is so bad a judge of a claim as he who makes it, I trust you will not believe that I shall feel otherwise towards you than as I have always felt, with sentiments of the greatest regard. . . . You will probably be surprised at my desiring a civil instead of a military office. It is certainly a departure from the line which I prefer, but I see the manner in which the military offices are filled, and I don't want to ask you for that which I know you cannot give me."

Research has failed to discover what answer, if any, was vouchsafed this communication. Wellesley remained in the Army. In October 1795 he and his regiment sailed from Southampton as part of an expedition against the French settlements in the West Indies. The vessels encountered a terrible gale, still known as "Christian's Storm," after the name of the admiral who commanded the fleet. While it might be untrue to say that the ships were in an unseaworthy condition, their sanitary state was deplorable, for they had but recently returned from a long voyage as hospital and prison transports. Scarcely forty-eight hours after they had sailed, and when they were off Weymouth, the full force of the blast struck them. One vessel foundered with all hands, half-a-dozen or more were totally dismasted, and hundreds of soldiers went to their death in a battle with the elements against which all the drill in the world was ineffectual. Fortunately Wellesley escaped, but when he received orders, in April 1796, to embark his men for India he was too ill to accompany them. However, he set sail for Calcutta

<sup>1</sup> Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1794-8.

## 34      The Story of Wellington

in June, and overtaking the 33rd Regiment at the Cape of Good Hope, duly reached his destination in February 1797. “The station is so highly advantageous to him that I could not advise him to decline it,” says Lord Mornington.<sup>1</sup> The good-natured Earl little knew what advantage, both to Wellesley and the Empire, was to accrue as the result of the failure of his brother’s civil ambitions.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sir Chichester Fortescue, dated 20th June 1796, cited by Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 19 *n*.



## CHAPTER III

# The Campaign of Seringapatam

(1797-1800)

*India, "a country fertile in heroes and statesmen."*

CANNING.

THE proverb to the effect that "History repeats itself" is not strictly true. The further we study the subject, the more we find that like causes do not necessarily bring about similar effects. The ill success which attended the expedition to the West Indies, ere it left the English Channel, has a fitting parallel so far as its practical utility is concerned in the force placed at General St Leger's disposal to attack Manilla, the Philippine Islands then being in the possession of Spain, with whom Great Britain was now at war. Fortunately it did not meet with disaster, but neither expedition reached its destination. Wellesley accepted the offer of Sir John Shore, the Governor-General of India, to command a brigade, and the troops were embarked. They had not proceeded farther than Penang before an order was issued for their recall owing to troubles brewing in India itself.

Shortly after his return to Calcutta the Colonel was placed in command of the forces in Madras. He also heard that his eldest brother had been offered the extremely responsible and difficult post of Governor-General in succession to Sir John Shore. It was now his turn to feed the flames of Mornington's ambition.

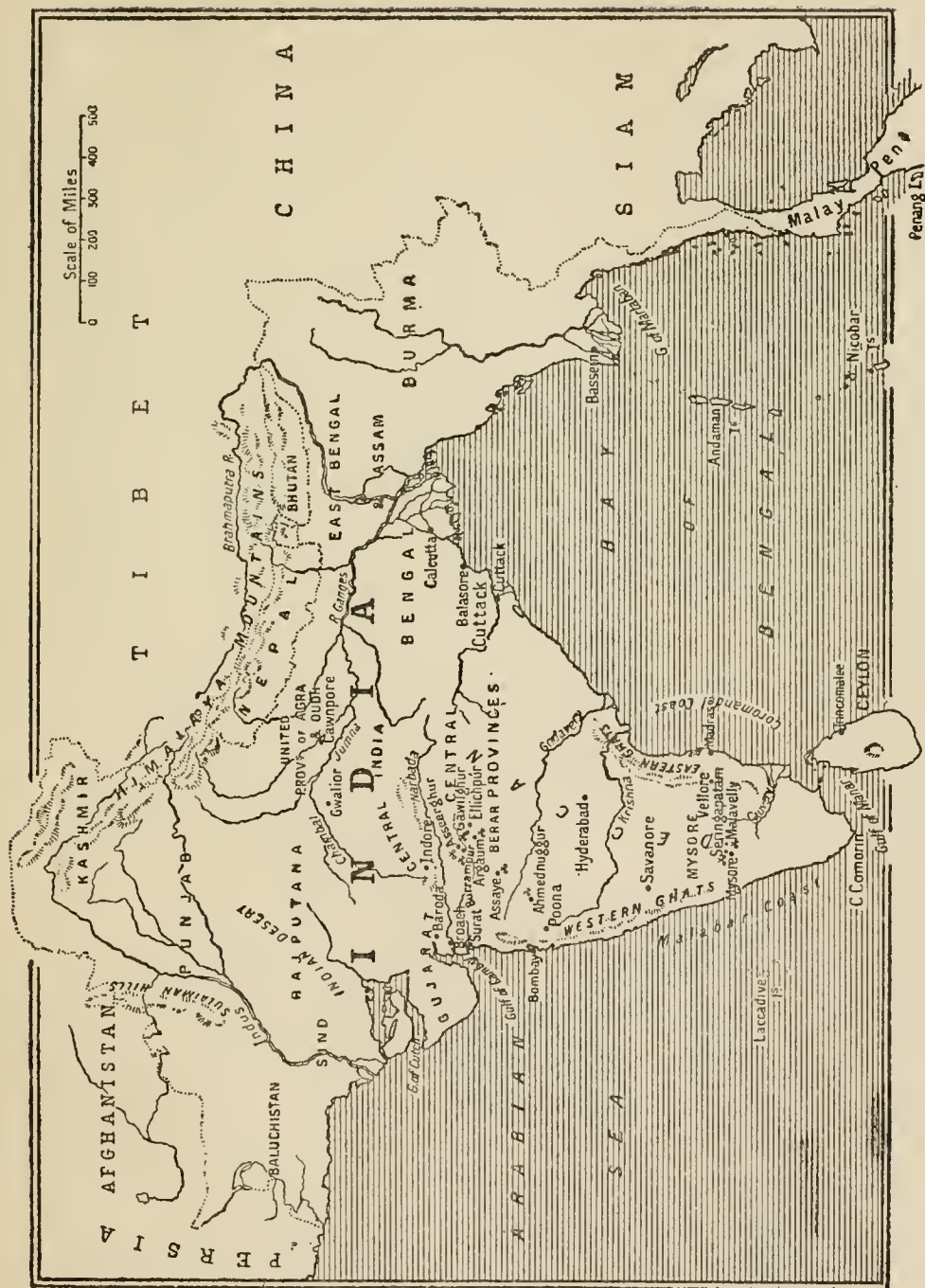
## 36      The Story of Wellington

He writes: "I strongly advise you to come out. I am convinced that you will retain your health; nay, it is possible that its general state may be improved, and you will have the fairest opportunity of rendering material service to the public and of doing yourself credit." Mornington lacked self-confidence, and a thousand and one doubts and fears possessed his mind. The Colonel reminded him that if he refused so advantageous a position on account of his young family, "you forego both for yourself and them what will certainly be a material and lasting advantage."

Mornington accepted, and arrived at Calcutta with his youngest brother, Henry, as private secretary in the middle of May 1798. He speedily found an antidote for home-sickness in endeavouring to unravel the tangled skein of affairs in Mysore, where Tipú Sultan was intriguing with the French Republic for assistance in attacking the possessions of the East India Company in Southern India. The pugnacious character of the son of Hyder Ali was typified by the tiger's stripes on his flag. He possessed the fanaticism and barbarity of the Oriental at his worst, and when opportunity occurred would feed a beast of prey with an English prisoner.

To secure either the friendship or the neutrality of the Nizám, whose territory abutted that of the blood-thirsty Tipú, now became of paramount importance. His army was officered by Frenchmen, which was proof positive that in the event of war it would assist Britain's enemy, although the Nizám had a distinct leaning towards the English. As it happened, the native troops mutinied against their officers, and, seizing his opportunity, the Nizám dismissed them. They were sent to England as prisoners, and subsequently allowed to return to their own country, a most humane consideration, for which Mornington was largely responsible. The military positions they formerly occupied were promptly filled by our own officers. A new treaty was





WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGN IN INDIA.

## 38      The Story of Wellington

made to preclude the Marhattás from allying themselves with Tipú, and a force of 6000 British troops was maintained by the Nizám at Hyderabad.

Meanwhile Wellesley had proceeded with his regiment to Madras, and, owing to the death of the senior officer, was placed in temporary command of the troops. In communication with Lord Clive, the Governor of the Presidency, and General Harris, the Commander-in-Chief, he busied himself with the multitudinous arrangements necessary for an advance upon Seringapatam, the capital of the Mysore Dominions. Horses, bullocks, and elephants had to be provided for the purpose of transport; forts equipped and provisioned; the siege train properly organized. He drew up a plan of campaign, and bent himself to the task with exacting energy. Notwithstanding the preparations for war, he still hoped that a resort to arms would prove unnecessary. Those who are apt to think that all military men delight in strife for the mere love of it will do well to remember this fact and judge less harshly, for Wellington is the typical representative of the British Army. But he believed in being ready, and hated nothing so much as "muddling through."

There was still a possibility, though scarcely a probability, that Tipú would repent. He had received word that Napoleon, then on his famous Egyptian expedition, was coming to his aid with an "invincible army." So far he had refused a definite statement of policy. Not until it was abundantly evident that the protracted negotiations of the Sultan of Mysore with the Government were merely to gain time, was a declaration of war issued on the 22nd February 1799. According to Wellesley, General Harris "expressed his approbation of what I had done, and adopted as his own all the orders and regulations I had made, and then said that he should mention his approbation publicly, only that he was afraid others would be displeased and jealous. Now as there is nothing to be got in the army except

## The Campaign of Seringapatam 39

credit, and as it is not always that the best intentions and endeavours to serve the public succeed, it is hard that when they do succeed they should not receive the approbation which it is acknowledged by all they deserve. I was much hurt about it at the time, but I don't care now, and shall certainly do everything to serve General Harris, and to support his name and authority."

Wellesley never feared to speak his mind, as his voluminous dispatches abundantly testify. In a letter to Mornington he admits that he had "lectured" the Commander-in-Chief because he allowed the Madras Military Board too much license in the matter of appointments. On the other hand, he had "urged publicly to the army (in which I flatter myself I have some influence) the necessity of supporting him, whether he be right or wrong." In his opinion it was "impossible" to hold the General "too high, if he is to be the head of the army in the field."

Harris certainly compensated Wellesley to some extent by placing him in command of thirteen regiments, including the Nizám's contingent, with the rank of brigadier. The strength of this force was about 16,000 men, that of the whole army 35,000, excluding 120,000 camp followers, the bugbear of the old-time commander. The Bombay corps under General Stuart attacked a portion of the enemy, commanded by the wily Tipú, in the vicinity of Sedasser, on the 6th March. This success augured well, for the Sultan was forced to retire.

Harris's first serious engagement took place near Malavelly on the 27th, Wellesley advancing to the attack and turning Tipú's right flank. After an engagement lasting three hours the enemy withdrew, with the loss of some 2000 men by death or wounds against the British 7 killed and 53 wounded. Tipú was a skilful soldier, and had not neglected to throw up a line of entrenchments before Seringapatam, into which city he now withdrew. To drive in the



## 40      The Story of Wellington

advanced outposts before definitely besieging the place was Harris's first object. This duty was intrusted to Wellesley and Colonel Shaw respectively, each having charge of a detachment. It was the task of the former to carry a tope, or thicket, and a village called Sultanpettah. He failed, for reasons explained in the following letter :

“ On the night of the 5th, we made an attack on the enemy's outposts, which, at least on my side, was not quite so successful as could have been wished. The fact is, that the night was very dark, that the enemy expected us, and were strongly posted in an almost impenetrable jungle. We lost an officer, killed, and nine men of the 33rd wounded, and at last, as I could not find out the post which it was desirable I should occupy, I was obliged to desist from the attack, the enemy also having retired from the post. In the morning they re-occupied it, and we attacked it again at day-light, and carried it with ease and with little loss. I got a slight touch on the knee, from which I have felt no inconvenience, and I have come to the determination never to suffer an attack to be made by night upon an enemy who was prepared and strongly posted, and whose posts had not been reconnoitred by daylight.” It should be added that twelve soldiers were taken prisoner and executed by the brutal method of nails being driven through their heads, and that Wellesley had previously given it as his opinion that the projected attack on the thicket would be a mistake. The operation undertaken by Colonel Shaw was successful.

The siege now proceeded in earnest, but a breach was not made in the solid walls surrounding Seringapatam for three days. On the 4th May the place was stormed by General Baird. General Sherbrooke's right column was the first to ford the Cauvery River. His men speedily scaled the ramparts, and engaged that part of the Sultan's 22,000 troops stationed in

## The Campaign of Seringapatam 41

the immediate vicinity. The defenders fought with the fatalistic energy and determination so characteristic of the natives of India. The left column followed, but found the way more difficult. Tipú, mounting the ramparts, fired at the oncoming red-coats with muskets handed to him by his attendants. It was his last battle ; his body was afterwards discovered in a covered gateway, together with hundreds of others. Wellesley, with his corps, occupied the trenches as a first reserve.

“About a quarter past one p.m.,” says an eyewitness, “as we were anxiously peering, telescope in hand, at the ford, and the intermediate ground between our batteries and the breach, a sharp and sudden discharge of musquetry and rockets, along the western face of the fort, announced to us that General Baird and the column of assault were crossing the ford ; and immediately afterwards, we perceived our soldiers, in rather loose array, rushing towards the breach. The moment was one of agony ; and we continued, with aching eyes, to watch the result, until, after a short and appalling interval, we saw the acclivity of the breach covered with a cloud of crimson,—and in a very few minutes afterwards, observing the files passing rapidly to the right and left at the summit of the breach, I could not help exclaiming, ‘Thank God ! the business is done.’”

“The firing continued in different parts of the place until about two o’clock, or a little afterwards ; when, the whole of the works being in the possession of our troops, and the St George’s ensign floating proudly from the flagstaff of the southern cavalier, announced to us that the triumph was completed.”

On the 5th, Wellesley took over the command from Baird, who had requested temporary leave of absence, and without delay began to restore some kind of order among the British troops, whose one object after victory was plunder, in which matter they showed little delicacy of feeling. The city was on fire in several

places, but the flames were all extinguished within twenty-four hours, and the inhabitants were "retiring to their homes fast." Having stopped, "by hanging, flogging, etc.," the insubordination of the troops and the rifling of the dead by the camp followers who had flocked in, Wellesley proceeded to bury those who had fallen.

During the four weeks of the siege the British lost 22 officers and 310 men, and no fewer than 45 officers and 1164 men were reported as wounded and missing.<sup>1</sup> The Commander mentions that jewels of the greatest value, and bars of gold, were obtained. As the prize agents assessed the treasure taken at £1,143,216, the wealth of Seringapatam must have been astounding. Wellesley's share came to about £4000.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of animals were required to carry the rich stuffs, plate, and richly-bound books from this city of opulence. A little humorous relief to so much sordidness is afforded by Wellesley's difficulties regarding some of the late Sultan's pets. "There are some tigers here," he writes, "which I wish Meer Allum would send for, or else I must give orders to have them shot, as there is no food for them, and nobody to attend to them, and they are getting violent." Tipú's 650 wives gave less trouble than the wild beasts. They were removed to a remote region and set at liberty.

Wellesley's next appointment was as Commander of the Forces in Mysore. He proved himself to be particularly well fitted for the post, which obviously required a man of infinite tact, who could be lenient or severe as circumstances demanded. It was Wellesley's testing-time, and he did not fail either in administration

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig (p. 26) says £7000, Roberts (p. 11) £7000 in money and £1200 in jewels. Sir Herbert Maxwell (p. 39) calls attention to a letter, dated the 14th June 1799, in which Wellesley "gives it as 3000 pagodas in jewels, and 7000 in money ; in all, 10,000 pagodas, equal to about £4000.



## The Campaign of Seringapatam 43

or the rough and tumble of the "little war" so soon to fall to his lot. He had already served on a commission appointed to go into the question of the partition of the conquered Dominions, a small part of which was made over to the Peshwá, and larger shares to the Nizám and the East India Company respectively. The dynasty overturned by Tipú's father was restored. As the new Rájá of Mysore was only five years of age, he was scarcely able to appreciate the fact that his territory was so greatly diminished.

We now come to a story worthy of a place in the Arabian Nights. It concerns an adventurer who, later, assumed the truly regal title of King of the World. Dhoondia Waugh, to give him the name by which those who were unfortunate enough to make his acquaintance first knew him, was the chief of a band of robbers whom Tipú had captured and thrown into prison. Recognizing in him a brave man, the Sultan remitted the sentence of death and gave him a military appointment, thus turning his acknowledged abilities into a less questionable channel, for a thief must needs be fearless and daring if he is to succeed. For some reason not altogether clear, Dhoondia Waugh was again imprisoned, and he did not regain his liberty until the fall of Seringapatam, when he was liberated, together with a number of other gaol-birds. The old thieving instinct reasserted itself, and as he encountered no difficulty in collecting a band of the late Tipú's cavalry, he speedily resorted to means and measures which alarmed the inhabitants of every place he visited. When pressed by the troops sent after them the horde took refuge in the territory of the Peshwá, the nominal head of the Marhattá confederacy. There they received anything but a cordial welcome, although it seems probable that reinforcements were obtained among the malcontents. However that may be, Dhoondia Waugh duly appeared near Savanore. Having the safety of the Mysore Dominions very much



at heart, for he had supreme civil and military control, Wellesley started in pursuit of the freebooter. Several fortresses held by Dhoondia's unlawful bands were stormed, his baggage taken, and a number of guns captured.

An affray which took place near the Malpurda River at the end of July 1800, not only reduced the chief's forces, but caused many of his followers to forsake the cause, although their strength in the following September was considerably more than that at Wellesley's command; in actual figures, some 5000 against 1200. The operation on the 10th of that month, which proved decisive, was extremely difficult, for the enemy was strongly posted at a village called Conahgull. The Colonel charged with such cool daring and so determined a front, that after having stood firm for some time the enemy made off, closely pursued for many miles by the British cavalry. A dire and just retribution was exacted; those who were not killed "were scattered in small parties over the face of the country." The King of the World had fought his last battle. He was found among the slain.

It is frequently asserted that Wellesley held but a low opinion of the troops which he commanded, and he certainly passed harsh judgment on those who shared his later campaigns. Not so in this particular instance, however. In the dispatch detailing "the complete defeat and dispersion" of the forces of Dhoondia, he expressly remarks on the "determined valour and discipline" of the soldiers, the patience and perseverance displayed in "a series of fatiguing services," and the excellent organization of the commissariat department.

Wellesley also showed that a kind heart is not necessarily the attribute of a weak nature. With a humanity entirely worthy so great a man, he had Dhoondia's "supposed or adopted son" cared for, and afterwards placed £400 in the hands of trustees

## The Campaign of Seringapatam 45

for his future use.<sup>1</sup> "Had you and your regicide army been out of the way," writes Sir Thomas Munro to Wellesley, "Dhoondia would undoubtedly have become an independent and powerful prince, and the founder of a new dynasty of cruel and treacherous Sultauns."

This short campaign likewise furnishes us with one of the secrets of the success of our national military hero. Just before he set out on the long chase after the King of the World, he was offered a position particularly rich in prospects, namely, the military command of an expedition for the surrender of the Dutch island of Batavia. The sole condition was that Lord Clive, the Governor of Madras, to whom he was responsible, could spare him. A man who was moved by purely personal ambition would have had no hesitation in bringing all his influence to bear on the Governor in order to secure so good an opening. Wellesley, however, recognizing that he had already begun preparations for the running to earth of the bloodthirsty and cruel Dhoondia—an end much to be desired—asked Clive to accept or decline for him as he thought best. He neither pleaded for nor against, although he hoped that if Admiral Rainier were not starting at once he might be able to join him when the work on hand was finished. "I am determined that nothing shall induce me to desire to quit this country, until its tranquillity is ensured. The general want of troops, however, at the present moment, and the season, may induce the Admiral to be desirous to postpone the expedition till late in the year. In that case it may be convenient that I should accompany him. . . ."

The Governor of Madras refused his permission, and there the matter ended. Months afterwards, when there seemed a probability of operations in the Marhattá

<sup>1</sup> In later years Wellington offered to provide for the unfortunate Spanish general, Alava, and gave him a small house in the park of Strathfieldsaye.

## 46      The Story of Wellington

Territory, Wellesley wrote a lengthy Memorandum on the means of carrying such a campaign to a successful issue. "The experience," he notes in his opening remarks, "which has been acquired in the late contest with Dhoondia Waugh, of the seasons, the nature of the country, its roads, its produce, and its means of defence, will be of use in pointing them out."

Thus it will be seen that the knowledge gained by Wellesley during the performance of an individual duty was stored up for future use. A march or a campaign was not simply carried out and then dismissed. It was a lesson learned and to be remembered. In military matters he was to a very appreciable extent self-taught. No drill-book in existence can furnish skill or assure victory, and genius itself is valueless on the battle-field without a clear perception based on things ascertained—"the experience which has been acquired" referred to in the above communication. Napoleon, against whom Wellesley was to fight in the years to come, early recognized the supreme importance of this principle. "The adroit man," he says, "profits by everything, neglects nothing which can increase his chances."

The "Sepoy General" was such a man.

## CHAPTER IV

### War with the Marhattás

(1801-3)

*“ We must get the upper hand, and if once we have that, we shall keep it with ease; and shall certainly succeed.”*

WELLINGTON.

**T**HAT disappointments are frequently blessings in disguise had already been proved by Arthur Wellesley. Unfortunately, it is easier to forget such a precept than to practise it, and each apparent failure to climb another rung of ambition's ladder is apt to be regarded as a definite set back. It was so with Wellesley, and a time of trial and perplexity followed the campaign of Seringapatam and the defeat of Dhoondia.

He eventually weathered the storm of depression which pressed upon him, as he weathered many another, but it must be admitted that he bent before it. It came about in this way. The French army in Egypt was still very active, although Napoleon had long since left it. He was now First Consul, and gradually preparing himself and the nation for the assumption of the Imperial crown. The Governor-General, henceforth to be known as Marquis Wellesley,<sup>1</sup> was of opinion that a small expedition should be sent either to Batavia or the Mauritius, or to assist Sir Ralph Abercromby in his attempt to drive the French out of Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> Created 20th December 1800.



## 48      The Story of Wellington

With one of these desirable objects in view his brother Arthur was given 5000 troops. He at once set off for Trincomalee, in the island of Ceylon, the headquarters of the little army, intent on personally superintending the arrangements. Shortly afterwards instructions came to hand from the Home Government that 3000 men were to be sent to Egypt. Colonel Wellesley was informed of this decision, and determined to lose no time in forwarding the project. Without receiving official word to do so, and still believing he held the premier post, he embarked the men and sailed for Bombay, where he had ordered an ample supply of provisions to be ready.

When off Cape Comorin, Wellesley received a letter from his brother, stating that he had appointed Major-General Baird to the command of the troops destined for the island of Batavia, which made it clear that the Governor-General had not then received the dispatches of the Secretary of State. Knowing that some at least of the troops on the transports would be required for Egypt, he proceeded on his way, and wrote to Baird of his intention. A little later a further letter came to hand from another source; but the fleet was in want of water, some of the troops had died, and "I was induced to adhere to my original plan."

Baird, who, on arriving at Trincomalee, found "the cupboard was bare," was deeply incensed at Wellesley's high-handed behaviour. The "culprit's" feelings as to the Governor-General's new appointment were also far from pacific. That he acted in perfect good faith is evident from the preceding, which is borne out in a lengthy dispatch in which he sought to justify his action in the eyes of his brother.

"I have not been guilty of robbery or murder," he writes to Henry Wellesley from Bombay on the 23rd March 1801, "and he has certainly changed his mind; but the world, which is always good-natured towards those whose affairs do not exactly prosper, will not, or

rather does not, fail to suspect that both, or worse, have been the occasion of my being banished, like General Kray, to my estate in Hungary.<sup>1</sup> I did not look, and did not wish, for the appointment which was given to me; and I say that it would probably have been more proper to give it to somebody else; but when it was given to me, and a circular written to the governments upon the subject, it would have been fair to allow me to hold it till I did something to deserve to lose it.

“I put private considerations out of the question, as they ought and have had no weight in causing either my original appointment or my supercession. I am not quite satisfied with the manner in which I have been treated by Government upon the occasion. However, I have lost neither my health, spirits, nor temper in consequence thereof. But it is useless to write any more upon a subject of which I wish to retain no remembrance whatever.”

Baird would have been scarcely human had he not felt hurt by finding himself head of a force which had disappeared, especially as the Colonel had already superseded him as Governor of Seringapatam. But he forgave, if he did not forget, and so did Wellesley. Some thirty years afterwards, when Baird's days of active soldiering were over, he remarked, during the course of a chat with Sir John Malcolm, who had himself done good service in India: “Time's are changed. No one knows so well as you how severely I felt the preference given on several occasions to your friend Wellesley, but now I see all these things from a far different point of view. It is the highest pride of my life that anybody should ever have dreamed of my being put in the balance with him. His name is now to me joy, and I may almost say glory.”

<sup>1</sup> The Austrian general, Kray, had succeeded Archduke Charles as Commander-in-Chief of the army in Germany in the campaign of 1800, but owing to his ill-success he was superseded in a few months by Archduke John, hence Wellesley's reference.



## 50      The Story of Wellington

It is satisfactory to know that Arthur Wellesley was not foolish enough to allow the iron to enter into his soul to such an extent as to prevent him from co-operating with Baird, into whose hands he placed a "Memorandum on the Operations in the Red Sea," accompanied by a letter acknowledging "the kind, candid, and handsome manner in which you have behaved towards me." When the expedition was ready, Arthur Wellesley was laid low with a fever, consequently the Commander-in-Chief was obliged to sail without his lieutenant, not altogether to his discomfiture one would surmise.

An attack of the dreaded Malabar itch did not tend to a speedy recovery of the invalid, but he was sufficiently well in May 1801 to resume his former duties at Seringapatam, where he had been reinstated by his brother. By living moderately, drinking little or no wine, avoiding much medicine, taking exercise, and keeping his mind employed, he eventually recovered. As Baird saw no fighting, his rival lost nothing by remaining in India.

Sir Herbert Maxwell<sup>1</sup> assumes that Arthur Wellesley's fever was caused by disappointment, but as the latter expressly states that Baird's "conduct towards me has by no means occasioned this determination (namely, to resign the appointment), but that it has been perfectly satisfactory,"<sup>2</sup> the statement is obviously based on a surmise that the Colonel was diplomatically lying. Everybody fully appreciates the influence of mind over matter, and thwarted desire may have weakened Wellesley's health, but surely the facts of the case scarcely justify so definite an assertion.

Colonel Wellesley remained in Mysore for nearly two years, during which he did his work both wisely and well, showing favour to none and justice to all. It was in February 1803 that the future Wellington, now a Major-General, received news that he was required for

<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Wellington," pp. 45-6.

<sup>2</sup> "Dispatches," vol. ii. p. 312.

active service against the Marhattás. The war-like intentions of this powerful confederacy, which alone could challenge British supremacy, had not escaped the notice of Government. The nominal head of the five native princes who constituted it was Baji Rao, the Peshwá of Poona, the others being Daulat Rao, Sindhia of Gwalior; Jeswant Rao, Holkar of Indore; the Gaikwár of Baroda, and the Bhonsla Rájá of Berar. Sindhia was the most powerful, and possessed a fine army drilled by French officers and commanded by Perron, a deserter from the French Marine.

Holkar had at his disposal no fewer than 80,000 splendidly-equipped men, mostly cavalry, likewise organized by European soldiers. Intense rivalry existed between these princes, and when, in October 1802, the latter invaded Poona, the armies of Sindhia and the Peshwá met with disaster. The Peshwá sought refuge with the British, and forthwith entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with Lord Wellesley as the only means of saving his territory. The chief clauses were that 6000 British troops should be kept at Poona, the expense being met by the assignment to the East India Company of certain territory; that the Peshwá would not make war with the other princes or allow them to prey on each other without the consent of Government; and that he should be reinstated in his capital. This arrangement, known as the Subsidiary Treaty of Bassein, soon had the effect of drawing together the remaining members of the Marhattá confederacy, cementing a friendship between Sindhia and Holkar, and an alliance between Sindhia and the Bhonsla Rájá. It is clear that the continued acknowledgment of the Peshwá as head of the confederacy, now that he was under the ægis of the British, would have been to admit the supremacy of the conquering Power they so much resented. Lord Wellesley had already signed a defensive alliance with the Gaikwár of Baroda, and in order to be ready for eventualities,

## 52      The Story of Wellington

men from the armies of the three Presidencies, namely, Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, were concentrated at various points, the first for operation on the north-west frontier of Mysore, the second for action about Surat and Broach, and the third for the occupation of Cuttack. A large force was also ordered to assemble at Cawnpore under General Lake, the Commander-in-Chief in India, while three corps were held in reserve. Major-General Wellesley was placed in command of a detachment of some 10,600 troops, to which must be added the Nizám's contingent of 8400 men under Colonel Stevenson, making 19,000 in all. His orders were to secure Poona, now held by a small garrison of Holkar's soldiers totalling not more than 1500. He was already on the march when he heard of the intention of the Governor, acting on Holkar's instructions, to burn the town on the approach of the British.

"We were within forty miles of the place"—Wellesley himself tells the story<sup>1</sup>—"when this resolution of Holkar's lieutenant was communicated to me. My troops had marched twenty miles that day under a burning sun, and the infantry could no more have gone five miles farther than they would have flown! The cavalry, though not fresh, were less knocked up, so I got together 400 of the best mounted among them, and set off. We started after dark on the night of the 19th of April, and in the afternoon of the 20th we got close to the place. There was an awful uproar, and I expected to see the flames burst out, but nothing of the kind occurred. Amrut Rao—that was the Marhattá's name—was too frightened to think of anything except providing for his own safety, and I had the satisfaction of finding, when I rode into the town, that he had gone off with his garrison by one gate as we went in by another. We were too tired to follow, had it been worth while to do so, which it

<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Arthur Duke of Wellington," by G. R. Gleig, M.A., F.R.G.S. (London Ed. 1864), pp. 33-4.



was not. Poona was safe, and that was all I cared for." In the following month the Peshwá returned to his capital.

Sindhia and the Rájá of Berar now busied themselves with gathering a large army at Burhanpur, ready to threaten the Deccan, Holkar retiring to Indore. Wellesley was no less active at Poona; his experience in Holland had taught him the all-important lesson that an efficient organization is a powerful ally. In addition, he was busy endeavouring to come to terms with Sindhia and the Rájá, for which purpose he had been given chief command of the British forces in the Marhattá states, with the fullest political authority. Similar powers were vested in General Lake in Northern India. After wasting as much time as possible in the negotiations so as to gain it for military preparations, Wellesley anticipated the inevitable. "I offered you peace on terms of equality," he writes on the 6th August 1803, "and honourable to all parties: you have chosen war, and are responsible for all consequences." On the following day hostilities were declared against Sindhia and the Rájá of Berar.

The stone-built fortress of Ahmednuggur, the capture of which would safeguard his communications with Poona and Bombay and prevent reinforcements from Southern India reaching the enemy, was his first object of attack. The main body of Sindhia's men was threatening Hyderabad, but the place was well garrisoned and so solidly constructed that it looked as though it would defy whatever artillery could be brought to bear on it. Wellesley said that with the exception of Vellore, in the Carnatic, it was the strongest country fort he had ever seen. However, he began operations against the outworks on the 8th, after having made proposals for its surrender without favourable result. "The Arabs," we are told, "defended their posts with the utmost obstinacy," but towards evening were forced to quit the wall. On the following day the ground in the

## 54      The Story of Wellington

neighbourhood of the fort was reconnoitred and a commanding position seized, on which a battery of four guns was constructed for use during the attack. The first shots were fired on the 10th at dawn, and the storming party speedily began its work. Three times an officer ascended a scaling ladder propped against one of the walls, and thrice he was hurled down by the defenders. The fourth attempt was successful, and, followed by some of his men, the gallant soldier literally hewed a way into the town. The remaining troops, pressing on, took the place of those who fell. At length the Commander of the enemy's forces surrendered, "on condition that he should be allowed to depart with his garrison, and that he should have his private property." His fourteen hundred men marched out of the fort, and Wellesley's troops took possession.

On the 23rd September the General found himself and his small contingent of some 8000 soldiers face to face with the whole combined army of Sindhia and the Rájá of Berar, a state of affairs brought about by unreliable information, causing the separation of Wellesley and Stevenson. At least 50,000 of the enemy were posted in a strong position behind the river Kaitna, near the village of Assaye. As Wellesley had received no reinforcements, and had only 17 guns compared with 128 commanded by skilful French officers at the disposal of the Marhattás, the disproportion of the forces was sufficiently obvious. To a general less experienced or daring the situation would have been considered sufficient cause for an instant retreat; even he called the attack "desperate." The problem for him to settle was, should he wait a few hours for Stevenson, or begin immediately with the scanty resources at his disposal? Although only 1500 of his men were British, the Commander-in-Chief decided on the latter alternative, ignoring the information vouchsafed by his guides that the river was absolutely impassable. Yet it was only by crossing the stream that he could take advan-





“ He was hurled down by the defenders ”

Thomas Maybank



tage of the opportunity to attack. Here Wellesley's native wit and acute intelligence—he himself called it “common sense”—assisted him. His telescope merely revealed a village on either side of the stream. This fact suggested the probability of a neighbouring ford. On investigation such proved to be the case, and if the passage was difficult the General was at least fortunate in being able to carry out the operation without severe molestation by the enemy, who had foolishly neglected to guard this point. They repaired the omission so far as was possible by firing upon the oncoming army as it slowly waded across, but the losses were comparatively trivial. “All the business of war,” Wellesley once told Croker, “and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do.”

The battle began well by the routing of some of the infantry and artillery by the Highlanders and Sepoys. This advantage was almost immediately counterbalanced by the mistaken zeal of the officer commanding the pickets, supported by the 74th Regiment. He foolishly led his men against the village, thereby exposing them to the concentrated fire of the enemy's artillery and musketry stationed there. Had he taken a less direct route, this could not have happened, but his enthusiasm overruled his caution. Men dropped down like ninepins in a skittle-alley when the ball is thrown by a skilful player. They fell by the dozen as they came within the zone of fire. Their comrades filled up the tell-tale gaps and continued to push on with a dogged tenacity entirely worthy their intrepid commander. Meanwhile what few British guns remained pounded away, and were silenced one by one as the men who worked them fell dead at their post. The enemy's cavalry then proceeded to decimate the already sorely depleted ranks of the 74th.

At this moment the 19th Light Dragoons, under Colonel Maxwell, were hurled at Sindhia's troops.

## 56      The Story of Wellington

The charge turned the fate of the day. What remained of the 74th rallied under the support thus given, and when Wellesley led the 78th into action the village fell. An attempt was made by the enemy to rally, but it was too late. Men who, with true Oriental cunning, had fallen as though killed in order to avoid the oncoming British cavalry as they charged, and had escaped the iron-shod hoofs of the horses, rejoined the ranks, only to find that the day had been lost. The whole body was soon flying helter-skelter from the blood-stained field towards Burrampur, abandoning artillery, baggage, ammunition—everything that precluded swift movement. Twelve hundred of the Marhattás breathed their last on this memorable day.

In fighting this battle—"the hardest-fought affair that ever took place in India"—o'er again in the twilight of his days, the Duke of Wellington made light of the indiscretions of the officers at Assaye and remembered only their bravery. "I lost an enormous number of men: 170 officers were killed and wounded, and upwards of 2000 non-commissioned officers and privates; <sup>1</sup> but we carried all before us. We took their guns, which were in the first line, and were fired upon by the gunners afterwards, who threw themselves down, pretending to be dead, and then rose up again after our men had passed; but they paid dearly for the freak. The 19th cut them to pieces. Sindhia's infantry behaved admirably. They were in support of his cannon, and we drove them off at the point of the bayonet. We pursued them as long as daylight lasted and the exhausted state of the men and horses would allow; and slept on the field." <sup>2</sup>

Wellesley himself, although not wounded, lost two horses. An eye-witness has recorded that he had never seen "a man so cool and collected as he was the whole

<sup>1</sup> 79 officers and 1778 soldiers were killed and wounded.—Sir Herbert Maxwell, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Gleig, pp. 37-8.

time." Stevenson arrived on the following evening, and set out almost immediately to follow the enemy, Wellesley being forced to remain owing to his lack of transport for the wounded, whom he refused to leave. The Colonel seconded Wellesley's magnificent victory by reducing the fortress of Burrampur on the 16th October, and that of Asseerghur on the 21st. Wellesley covered Stevenson's operations and defended the territories of the Nizám and the Peshwá. "I have been like a man who fights with one hand and defends himself with the other," he notes on the 26th October. "I have made some terrible marches, but I have been remarkably fortunate: first, in stopping the enemy when they intended to press to the southward, through the Casserbarry ghaut; and afterwards, by a rapid march to the northward, in stopping Sindhia, when he was moving to interrupt Colonel Stevenson's operations against Asseerghur; in which he would otherwise have undoubtedly succeeded."



## CHAPTER V

### Last Years in India

(1803-5)

*"Time is everything in military operations."*

WELLINGTON.

**B**HONSLA RÁJÁ now became the immediate object of Wellesley's attention. While proceeding in quest of him the General received envoys from Sindhia requesting an armistice. This was granted on the 23rd November 1803, the principal condition imposed by Wellesley being that the enemy's army should retire forty miles east of Ellichpúr. This clause was not fulfilled, the cavalry of the wily Sindhia encamping at Sersooly, some four miles from the position occupied by Manoo Bappoo, brother of the Rájá, ready for immediate co-operation. Having again united their divisions, Wellesley and Stevenson pushed towards them. "A confused mass" about two miles beyond Sersooly proved to be the enemy's armies on the march. A little later the General made out "a long line of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, regularly drawn up on the plains of Argaum, immediately in front of that village."

"Although late in the day," says Wellesley in describing the events of the 29th November, "I immediately determined to attack this army. Accordingly, I marched on in one column, the British cavalry leading in a direction nearly parallel to that of the enemy's line ;

covering the rear and left by the Mogul and Mysore cavalry. The enemy's infantry and guns were in the left of their centre, with a body of cavalry on their left. Sindhia's army, consisting of one very heavy body of cavalry, was on the right, having upon its right a body of pindarries and other light corps. Their line extended above five miles, having in their rear the village and extensive gardens and enclosure of Argaum; and in their front a plain, which, however, was much cut by watercourses, etc.

"I formed the army in two lines; the infantry in the first, the cavalry in the second, and supporting the right; and the Mogul and Mysore cavalry the left, nearly parallel to that of the enemy; with the right rather advanced in order to press upon the enemy's left. Some little time elapsed before the lines could be formed, owing to a part of the infantry of my division which led the column having got into some confusion. When formed, the whole advanced in the greatest order; the 74th and 78th regiments were attacked by a large body (supposed to be Persians), and all these were destroyed. Sindhia's cavalry charged the 1st battalion, 6th regiment, which was on the left of our line, and were repulsed; and their whole line retired in disorder before our troops, leaving in our hands 38 pieces of cannon and all their ammunition.

"The British cavalry then pursued them for several miles, destroyed great numbers, and took many elephants and camels and much baggage. The Mogul and Mysore cavalry also pursued the fugitives, and did them great mischief. Some of the latter are still following them; and I have sent out this morning all of the Mysore, Mogul, and Marhattá cavalry, in order to secure as many advantages from this victory as can be gained, and complete the enemy's confusion. . . . The troops conducted themselves with their usual bravery. . . ."

One of the bravest deeds performed during the battle

## 60      The Story of Wellington

of Argaum was that of Lieutenant Langlands, of the 74th. Wounded in the fleshy part of the leg by a spear, he promptly pulled out the weapon and thrust it through the body of the Arab who had thrown it. A Sepoy who witnessed this extraordinary display of self-possession, forgetting all discipline, rushed from the ranks and patted the young officer on the back, yelling in his native tongue, "Well done, sir; very well done!"

Wellesley next marched on the mountain fort of Gawilghur, strongly garrisoned by the Rájá's troops. This defence consisted of an outer and inner fort, the former protected by strongly-built walls, and the whole by ramparts and towers. Admittance was gained only by three gates, all extremely difficult of access by an invading army owing to the roads leading to them. That to the south, communicating with the inner fort, was long and steep, and could only be negotiated on foot; the second was exposed to the guns mounted on the west side and was extremely narrow and scarped by rock; the third, or north gate, communicated with the village. Wellesley chose the last as being the most practicable for his purpose, although he did not blind his eyes to the fact that "the difficulty and labour of moving ordnance and stores from Labada would be very great."

From the 7th December, when the corps under Wellesley and Stevenson marched from Ellichpúr by different routes, till the 12th, "on which Colonel Stevenson broke ground near Labada, the troops in his division went through a series of laborious services, such as I never before witnessed, with the utmost cheerfulness and perseverance. The heavy ordnance and stores were dragged by hand over mountains, and through ravines, for nearly the whole distance, by roads which it had been previously necessary for the troops to make for themselves."

On the night of the 12th, Stevenson erected two

batteries in front of the north face of the fort, and Wellesley one on the mountain, "under the southern gate." Although firing was begun on the following morning, the breaches in the walls of the outer fort were not sufficiently large for practical purposes until the 14th. Next day, while the storming-party was getting to work, Wellesley made two attacks from the southward so as to draw the enemy's fire upon himself as much as possible. The north-west gate was carried, and a detachment entered without difficulty. Captain Campbell, with the light infantry of the 94th, then succeeded in fixing ladders against the wall of the inner fort. They "escaladed the wall, opened the gate for the storming party, and the fort was shortly in our possession." In a later communication Wellesley mentions that he never knew a place taken by storm which was so little plundered, "and it is but doing justice to the corps to declare that in an hour after having stormed that large place, they marched out with as much regularity as if they had been only passing through it."

Bhonsla Rájá had already sent his vakeel <sup>1</sup> to sue for peace. This was granted by his ceding to the Company the province of Cuttack, with the district of Balasore, and dismissing the European officers who had played so important a part in the drilling of his army. Sindhia also "began to be a little alarmed respecting his own situation," and shortly afterwards concluded hostilities, handing over all the country between the Jumna and the Ganges, and several important fortresses. These happenings did not relieve Wellesley from active service. Several bands of freebooters, "the terror of the country," consisting mainly of fugitive soldiers from the defeated armies, were carrying on lawless practices in the West Deccan. After crossing the Godavery, he and some of his troops marched many weary miles along bad roads, often at accelerated speed, in order to attack them, only to find that the enemy

<sup>1</sup> Envoy.



## 62      The Story of Wellington

had received intelligence of their approach, probably from a traitor in Wellesley's own ranks. With set purpose the General continued to follow where the marauders led, and eventually broke up the bands, securing the whole of their guns, ammunition, and baggage, thus depriving them of their means of warfare : "they have lost every thing which could enable them to subsist when collected." Wellesley afterwards asserted that his chase of the freebooters was the greatest march he ever made.

Towards the end of May 1804 Wellesley received instructions from the Governor-General to break up the army in the Deccan, the task of running to earth Holkar, the sole remaining enemy of the confederacy, being given to Lake. In the following month he relinquished his command, and after a short visit to Calcutta returned to Seringapatam. He had already requested that he might be allowed to leave India "when circumstances will permit it," and the Commander-in-Chief had given him the necessary permission. He was dissatisfied because he had not been promoted since he became Major-General, "and I think that there appears a prospect of service in Europe, in which I should be more likely to get forward." In addition, he was suffering from rheumatism, "for which living in a tent during another monsoon is not a very good remedy." He sailed for the Homeland on the 10th March 1805, after six years of hard work, and still harder fighting, in the interests of British rule in India.

The following contemporary pen-portrait of "the Sepoy General," sketched for us by Captain Sherer, will enable us to visualize him as he appeared at this time :

"General Wellesley was a little above the middle height, well limbed, and muscular ; with little incumbrance of flesh beyond that which gives shape and manliness to the outline of the figure ; with a firm tread, an erect carriage, a countenance strongly patrician,



both in feature, profile, and expression, and an appearance remarkable and distinguished : few could approach him on any duty, or on any subject requiring his serious attention, without being sensible of a something strange and penetrating in his clear light eye. Nothing could be more simple and straightforward than the matter of what he uttered ; nor did he ever in his life affect any peculiarity or pomp of manner, or rise to any coarse, weak loudness in his tone of voice. It was not so that he gave expression to excited feeling."

To what extent did the Governor-General influence his brother's career in India ? First of all we must understand the position of the Marquis Wellesley. It was naturally one of tremendous power and responsibility. The glamour attached to the post was sufficiently evident to the general public. There it ended, for it was glitter rather than gold to its holder. The Directors of the East India Company, ever on the side of rigid economy and large dividends, expressly forbade the costly system of conquest and annexation, yet this was necessarily the sheet anchor of Wellesley's policy, as former chapters have shown. When pacific measures were tried and failed, it would have been disastrous to continue them. As it usually took over three months<sup>1</sup> for a communication from India to reach England, it follows that the same period was necessary for a reply. The consequences of indecision on the part of the Viceroy, of waiting for advice from home in matters requiring urgency, were therefore fraught with dire peril. On the other hand, if he showed too despotic tendencies he ran a grave risk of incurring displeasure. Indeed, this is exactly what happened, for Lord Wellesley was recalled in 1805 and censured by the Court of Pro-

<sup>1</sup> Alison in his "Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart" (vol. i. p. 175), says that it generally took six months to make the voyage. When Sir James Mackintosh sailed from Portsmouth for Bombay in 1804 his vessel only occupied three months and thirteen days (see his "Memoirs," vol. i. p. 207).

## 64      The Story of Wellington

prietors. When, after thirty years, it became evident that his administration had been wise and not foolish, that he had carried out what would have had to be done eventually to establish British influence, the Directors relented and voted him a grant of £20,000.

Fortunately there was "a barrier state" in London between the Governor-General and the Directors in the person of the President of the Board of Control, the said Board consisting of Cabinet Ministers. This position had been occupied since July 1802 by Lord Castlereagh, who, on taking office, found that Wellesley had come to the conclusion that resignation was better than humiliation. He did much to smooth over the difficulties, and from that time until Wellesley's return to England Castlereagh loyally supported the Viceroy on every possible occasion. For instance, when the reduction of the Indian establishment to 10,000 troops was seriously mooted by the Directors and the Cabinet at home, notwithstanding the threatening attitude of the Marhattá confederacy, it was largely due to Castlereagh's support of Lord Wellesley's demands that so absurd a policy was prevented.

The President of the Board of Control never interfered in the matter of patronage, knowing full well that the Governor-General on the spot was better able to recognize merit for the special requirements of the service than a man thousands of miles away. This brings us back to our proper subject.

We have noted how Lord Mornington discerned the opportunity awaiting his brother in India, and how that brother reciprocated when the former was diffident in the matter of accepting the chief official post there. It is true that Wellesley was made Governor of Seringapatam over the head of Baird, his senior officer, but whether this appointment was due to the fact that Mornington influenced General Harris in the matter of his choice is not sufficiently evident. There is a

strong suspicion that it was,<sup>1</sup> because Arthur Wellesley had only served as commander of the reserve, whereas Baird was the leader of the assault, and as such military tradition unquestionably favoured his appointment.

Again, in the matter of the Batavian expedition, the Governor-General offered Wellesley the appointment as military commander: "The King has given me the power of selecting the persons who are to conduct this expedition; . . . and a conscientious sense of duty induces me to think that you are the most fit person to be selected for that service, provided you can safely be spared from Mysore for the period of the expedition. . . ." In Mornington's opinion, "the expedition will be very advantageous to the naval and military commanders." On the other hand, we know that when the project was abandoned for a diversion on the coasts of the Red Sea, he superseded his brother. One wonders what would have happened when Wellesley set off for Bombay without instructions, had he not been closely related to the Governor-General. The Marquis certainly did not minimize Arthur's successes to those at home. Writing to Addington, then Speaker of the House of Commons, in October 1800, he says, "My brother Arthur has distinguished himself most brilliantly in an expedition against an insurgent, who had collected a great force of predatory cavalry—the wreck of Tippú's army." Three years later, when Addington was Prime Minister, he again drew attention to his brother's achievements, as follows:—

"My public duty will not permit me to be silent respecting Major-General Wellesley. His march from Mysore to Poona, his able conduct of the measures adopted for restoring the Peishwah, for conciliating the feudatory Mahratta chiefs who maintained their

<sup>1</sup> "His relationship to the Governor-General naturally lent much weight to his views with Lord Clive and General Harris, but," Sir Herbert Maxwell adds (p. 24), "it is remarkable how freely and frequently the elder brother sought the younger's advice."



allegiance to the Peishwah, for preserving the dominions of the Nizám, and our interests at Hyderabad, combined with his sieges of Ahmednuggur, Burrampur, and Asseerghur, his glorious and splendid victories at Assaye and on the plains of Argaum, with the entire ruin of Sindhia's French troops and powerful artillery in the Deccan, must place the name of General Wellesley among the most bright and distinguished characters that have adorned the military history of the British power in India. He is now employed in reducing the main fortress of Perar, and in negotiating, with the utmost judgment and skill, the conditions of peace. I leave his merits to your justice, and to the judgment of his King and country. The pride and honour of being allied by the nearest ties of blood to such an officer cannot absolve me from the obligations of my public station, as the representative of the supreme civil and military authority in India; and I cannot, therefore, omit this testimony to the merits of General Wellesley without a positive violation of my duty."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may be thought of such glowing praise from a brother on the score of good taste, it evidently achieved its purpose, for before he left India, Arthur Wellesley was appointed an extra Knight Companion of the Bath and received the thanks of the King and Parliament.

Earl Roberts,<sup>2</sup> in summing up this phase of the future Duke's career, remarks: "On his arrival in India he found himself in a country where in almost every matter the power and influence of the Governor-General were supreme, and the Governor-General being his

<sup>1</sup> "The Life and Correspondence of the Right Honble. Henry Addington, first Viscount Sidmouth," by the Honble. George Pellew, D.D. (London, 1847), vol. ii. p. 242. In this connection see also "Wellington's Despatches," vol. ii. pp. 335-36 n., and "Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley, K.G.," vol. iii. p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> "The Rise of Wellington," by Earl Roberts, V.C., p. 26.

brother, he was quickly placed in a position of responsibility, which gave him the opportunity of developing his talents as a soldier and statesman in the best of all schools—the school of practice. It cannot be denied that in early life Wellington owed much to family influence,<sup>1</sup> and to a system of promotion which would now be stigmatized as jobbery. On the other hand, he took full advantage of every chance that was thrown in his way, and by his industry and capacity fully justified the exceptional favour with which he was treated.”

With this conclusion the present writer heartily agrees ; whatever Sir Arthur gained from his relative's assistance was amply repaid in his achievements. British India owes much to the brothers Wellesley.

<sup>1</sup> “Personal interest was as much recognized in those days as the chief motor in military promotion, as seniority and merit are now.”—Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 67.



## CHAPTER VI

### Service in England, Ireland, and Denmark

(1805-7)

*“I am not afraid of responsibility, God knows, and I am ready to incur any personal risk for the public service.”*

WELLINGTON.

WHEN, in 1803, the short-lived Peace of Amiens came to an end, and Great Britain and France again resorted to the sword, Napoleon's first feat of arms was the conquest of Hanover. Thus, at the very beginning of the second phase of the Great War, George III found himself not only minus his hereditary continental possessions, but deprived of a very useful base for those futile military excursions so beloved of the British Government.

That His Majesty received the tidings of his loss “with great magnanimity, and a real kingliness of mind,” may or may not be true. His ministers asserted that such was the case; considerations of policy would have precluded them from saying otherwise.

However this may be, two months after Sir Arthur Wellesley landed in England, that is to say, in November 1805, he was given the command of a brigade in an expedition to Hanover about to be undertaken by Lord Cathcart. The object was to rout the comparatively few French troops left to garrison the country, and to

## In England Ireland and Denmark 69

co-operate with Russian, Swedish, and Danish troops in ridding Germany of the common enemy. The surrender of Mack at Ulm, and Napoleon's wonderful victory at Austerlitz, although it followed within a few weeks of Nelson's signal triumph at Trafalgar,<sup>1</sup> completely shattered this desirable object, just as the negotiations that followed put an end to the ambitious hopes of the Third Coalition. The recall of the troops before they had been able to carry out any of the objects of the diversion, beyond gaining some thousands of adherents to the rank and file, therefore became imperative, and was duly effected.

Sir Arthur Wellesley now spent a short time in command of his brigade at Hastings, and he was gazetted colonel of the famous 33rd Regiment, which post had become vacant on the death of the venerable Marquis Cornwallis, his brother's successor in India. The next important event in his life, if not in his career, was his marriage to the Hon. Catherine Pakenham, thus consummating a romance begun many years before,<sup>2</sup> and his single ambition apart from the Army. The ceremony was performed in Dublin on the 10th April 1806, the bridegroom being nearly thirty-seven years of age. One wishes it were possible to add that "they lived happy ever after." Biography, the twin sister of History, tells us that it was not so, and Gleig suggests that a broken engagement with a second suitor, of which Wellesley was not informed on his return from India, was partly the cause.<sup>3</sup> Two days after the wedding Wellesley was elected Member of Parliament for Rye, his main object in seeking political distinction being that he might defend his brother's administration in India, where his system

<sup>1</sup> Shortly after his return from India Wellesley had his only interview with Nelson, an account of which is given in the author's companion work, "The Story of Nelson," pp. 113-4.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> "Personal Reminiscences of the first Duke of Wellington" (Edinburgh 1904), p. 274.

## 70      The Story of Wellington

of making recalcitrant States subsidiary to England, whilst retaining their own rulers, was the subject of an embittered attack. The "high crimes and misdemeanours" alleged against Lord Wellesley were referred to from time to time, but on the 17th March 1808, the following motion was carried by 182 votes against 31: "That it appears to this House that the Marquis Wellesley, in his arrangements in the province of Oude, was actuated by an ardent zeal for the service of his country, and an anxious desire to promote the safety, interests, and prosperity of the British Empire in India." This did not altogether end the unsavoury affair, for another unsuccessful attempt to incriminate the statesman was made some time later.

Sir Arthur was by this time Chief Secretary for Ireland, having been appointed in the previous year. Once again we see two members of this distinguished family holding prominent appointments, for Henry Wellesley became one of the Secretaries to the Treasury in the newly-appointed Portland ministry.

Barrington, whose acquaintance we have already made, relates an interesting anecdote of the soldier at this time. He met Lord Castlereagh, accompanied by a gentleman, in the Strand. "His lordship stopped me," he writes, "whereat I was rather surprised, as we had not met for some time; he spoke very kindly, smiled, and asked if I had forgotten my old friend, Sir Arthur Wellesley? whom I discovered in his companion, but looking so sallow and wan, and with every mark of what is called a worn-out man, that I was truly concerned at his appearance. But he soon recovered his health and looks, and went as the Duke of Richmond's <sup>1</sup> secretary to Ireland, where he was in all material traits still Sir Arthur Wellesley, but it was Sir Arthur Wellesley judiciously improved. He had not forgotten his friends, nor did he forget himself. He said that he had accepted the office of secretary only on the terms that it should not

<sup>1</sup> Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

impede or interfere with his military pursuits; and what he said proved true. . . .”

Obviously his duties in Ireland bear no comparison with those he so successfully undertook in India, but following his own maxim, “to do the business of the day in the day,” he got through a vast amount of routine labour, frequently important, sometimes trivial. Under the former head we must put his investigation of the military defences of the island. It must not be forgotten that although the invasion of the United Kingdom by Napoleon was no longer a standing menace, there was always a likelihood of its resurrection, and Ireland was the danger zone.

The Peace of Tilsit, signed between France and Russia on the 7th July 1807, and between France and Prussia on the 9th of the same month, was a most serious blow to British interests. By a secret treaty the Emperor Alexander undertook to aid Napoleon against England if that Power refused to make peace within a certain period, to recognize the equality of all nations at sea, and to hand back the conquests made by her since 1805. As a bait—it really savoured of insult—Great Britain was to be offered Hanover. Should she refuse these terms the Autocrats of France and of Russia agreed to compel Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal to join them in a vast naval confederacy against Great Britain, and to close their ports against her. In addition, the reigning monarchs of Spain and Portugal were to be deposed in favour of the Bonaparte family. For his connivance in the matter Alexander was to be handsomely compensated in the Ottoman Empire and by territorial acquisitions in Western Europe.

Fortunately, or otherwise, according to the point of view, the British Cabinet was put in possession of certain facts regarding these plans. Canning, who was Minister for Foreign Affairs, realizing the responsibilities of his unenviable position, as also of that of his country, determined to forestall the plotters. He



## 72      The Story of Wellington

felt that some kind of arrangement with Denmark was essential, especially as the Prince Regent of Portugal had communicated news to the effect that Napoleon purposed to invade England with the Portuguese and Danish fleets. Canning suggested to Denmark that her fleet should be put in the safe custody of England until peace was restored. In addition, he promised a subsidy of £100,000, and the assistance of troops should Denmark be attacked. Mr F. J. Jackson was sent to open negotiations; the Prince Royal promptly vetoed them. "I stated plainly," says Jackson, "that I was ordered to demand the junction of the Danish fleet with that of England, and that in case of refusal it was the determination of His Majesty to enforce it."

Lord Cathcart was put in command of an army of 27,000 troops, the naval portion of the expedition being placed in the hands of Admiral Gambier. No sooner had Sir Arthur Wellesley heard of the project than he communicated with Castlereagh, then at the War Office and ever his staunch supporter, for an opportunity to take part. He was given charge of a division. On the 3rd August a formidable array of twenty-five sail-of-the-line and over fifty gunboats and transports appeared off Elsinore. Gambier and Cathcart were told by Jackson "that it now rested with them to carry out the measure prescribed by the British Government." In a letter to his brother the diplomatist adds, "The Danes must, I think, soon surrender, for they are without any hopes of succour, are unfurnished with any effectual means of resistance, and are almost in total want of the necessaries of life, as far as I could learn or was able to see for myself during my few hours' stay there.<sup>1</sup> There were no droves of cattle or flocks of sheep; no provisions of any sort being sent in the direction of the city. No troops marching towards the town; no guns mounted on the ramparts; no embrasures cut, in fact, no preparations of any sort. What the Danes chiefly rely on is the defence by water.

<sup>1</sup> At Copenhagen.



## In England Ireland and Denmark 73

They brought out this morning several *praams*<sup>1</sup> and floating batteries, and cut away one or two of the buoys.

“The garrison of Copenhagen does not amount to more than four thousand regular troops. The *landwehr* is a mere rabble, as indeed all *levées en masse* must be.

“The people are said to be anxious to capitulate before a conflagration takes place, which must happen soon after a bombardment begins, when, not improbably, the fleet as well as the city will become a prey to the flames.”

Jackson's prophecy came true, but against his statement that the army disembarked at Veldbeck “in grand style,” we must set that of Captain Napier: “I never saw any fair in Ireland so confused as the landing; had the enemy opposed us, the *remains* of the army would have been on their way to England.”<sup>2</sup> Wellesley's first affray—it can scarcely be termed a battle—took place at Roskilde. Like almost everything connected with the expedition, Jackson has something to say about it, and that “something” in this particular instance is anything but complimentary. “Sir Arthur Wellesley,” he tells his wife, “has had an affair which you will probably see blazoned forth in an extraordinary *Gazette*. With about four thousand men he attacked a Danish corps of armed peasantry, and killed and wounded about nine hundred men, besides taking upwards of fifteen hundred prisoners, amongst whom were sixty officers. One was a General officer. I spoke to him this morning, for he and his officers are let off on their parole. The men are on board prison ships, and miserable wretches they are, fit for nothing but following the plough. They wear red and green striped woollen jackets, and wooden *sabots*. Their long lank hair hangs over their shoulders, and gives to their rugged features a wild expression. The knowing ones say that after the first fire they threw away their arms,

<sup>1</sup> Flat-bottomed boats, usually armed with small guns.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 87.

hoping, without them, to escape the pursuit of our troops. In fact, the *battle* was not a very glorious one, but this you will keep for yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

Wellesley himself afterwards referred to the event as “the little battle at Kiöge,” and mentioned that “the Danes had made but a poor resistance; indeed, I believe they were only new raised men—militia.”<sup>2</sup>

The bombardment of Copenhagen began on the 2nd September 1807, and concluded three days later, when an armistice was granted in order that terms might be discussed. On the 7th, Copenhagen capitulated. The conditions imposed by Sir Arthur Wellesley, Sir Home Popham, and Lieutenant-Colonel Murray were that the British should occupy the citadel and dockyards for six weeks, and take possession of the ships and naval stores. Their troops would then evacuate Zealand. “I might have carried our terms higher . . . had not our troops been needed at home,” Wellesley writes to Canning. The various clauses were carried out, and fifteen sail-of-the-line, fifteen frigates, and thirty-one smaller vessels of the Danish fleet, as well as 20,000 tons of naval stores, were escorted to England. “That the attack was necessary,” says a recent historian, “no one will now deny. England was fighting for her existence; and, however disagreeable was the task of striking a weak neutral, she risked her own safety if she left in Napoleon’s hand a fleet of such proportions. In Count Vandal’s words, she ‘merely broke, before he had seized it, the weapon which Napoleon had determined to make his own.’”<sup>3</sup> Dr J. Holland Rose disapproves, and points out that “In one respect our action was unpardonable: it was not the last desperate effort of a

<sup>1</sup> Wilson is wrong in some of his facts. The Danish troops numbered some 14,000, and 1100 prisoners were taken. See Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> “The Croker Papers,” vol. ii. pp. 120-21.

<sup>3</sup> H. W. Wilson, B.A., in “Cambridge Modern History,” vol. ix. p. 236.

## In England Ireland and Denmark 75

long period of struggle : it came after a time of selfish torpor fatal alike to our reputation and the interests of our allies. After protesting their inability to help them, Ministers belied their own words by the energy with which they acted against a small State.”<sup>1</sup>

Canning’s hope for an alliance with Sweden, in order to keep open the Baltic, was destined never to be fulfilled. Sir John Moore was sent to assist Gustavus in his efforts to resist the attacks of Russia, but the nation deserted the King, deposed him, and joined Napoleon. War speedily broke out between Sweden and Denmark, and also between the latter and Great Britain. The Czar’s overtures to England on behalf of France, as arranged at Tilsit, came to nothing. He was not anxious for them to have any other ending, so enraptured was he with Napoleon’s grandiloquent schemes. Enraptured ? Yes, but only for a few short years.

<sup>1</sup> “The Life of Napoleon I,” vol. ii. p. 143.

## CHAPTER VII

# The First Battles of the Peninsular War (1808)

*“ In war men are nothing : it is a man who is everything.”*

NAPOLÉON.

ON his return from Copenhagen, Wellesley, never happy unless his mind was fully occupied, resumed his duties as Chief Secretary for Ireland. Special mention of the services he had rendered to his country was made in the House of Commons, and there was some talk of a second period in India, where affairs were far from settled. Before long, however, it became increasingly evident that his knowledge and ability would be required nearer home.

Portugal, our old ally, had been forced by Napoleon to declare war against Great Britain on the 20th October 1807. Bent on pursuing the rigid restrictions on trade imposed by his Continental System, he had also peremptorily ordered the confiscation of the property of the British merchants. Fortunately for those most concerned, the Prince Regent remembered past friendship and may have discerned future possibilities. He temporized, and this enabled many of the English residents to settle their affairs and sail for home before the Dictator could enforce obedience. The sequel was





WELLINGTON'S PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS.

## 78      The Story of Wellington

the overrunning of the kingdom by French troops under the intrepid Junot, who met with no resistance, and the desertion of their subjects by the Royal Family, who sailed for Brazil.

Although this plan was carried out at the earnest request of the British Government, as represented by Lord Strangford, the Ambassador at the Portuguese Capital, it cannot be regarded as a pleasing example of patriotism on the part of the House of Braganza.

In October 1807, Junot, in command of the French Army, and strengthened by a few regiments of the Spanish corps placed at Napoleon's disposal for the dismemberment of the western portion of the Iberian Peninsula, began his march on Lisbon. He concluded it on the 30th November with only 1500 troops, the remainder following slowly by reason of the terrible sufferings they had endured during a forced march made at Napoleon's urgent behest.

Here it should be mentioned that the presence of the Spanish troops was due to the infamous Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed the previous October. In this arrangement the Emperor had promised Godoy, the real ruler of Spain and an intensely ambitious man, a large slice of territory in the country about to be conquered in return for favours rendered. It is more than probable that Napoleon never intended this particular clause to be taken seriously by anyone but his dupe; the gift was so much dust thrown in the eyes of the favourite for the purpose of securing the entry of French troops into Spain.<sup>1</sup> In this he was pre-eminently successful. Once in Lisbon Junot speedily removed any fear of the national army by breaking up many of the regiments and sending the remainder on service outside the kingdom. The flames of rebellion were not yet kindled. So far so good.

Unhappily the chief prizes which the Emperor had hoped to secure at Lisbon were beyond his reach.

<sup>1</sup> See Oman's "Peninsular War," vol. i. pp. 1-11.

## First Battles of the Peninsular War 79

Even the squadron which was to have seized the Portuguese and British shipping in the harbour was held in check by the hated English.

Napoleon, pretending to be the friend of Spain, was in reality her worst enemy. He merely used her as a useful tool to pick Portuguese locks, and then pursued the same course with his friend's lockers. He began his unwelcome attentions by seizing the important frontier fortresses of Pampeluna, Barcelona, San Sebastian, and Figueras, and invading the country by a force which speedily numbered 116,000 men, mostly conscripts, for he thought the country easy prey. Murat entered Madrid as Junot had entered Lisbon. By the most unscrupulous methods, namely, the enforced abdication of Charles IV and his son Ferdinand, the Emperor secured the throne, permanently as he fondly imagined, for his brother Joseph, King of Naples.

In July 1808 the eldest Bonaparte was proclaimed King, and entered his capital. Within a month he found it desirable to retire behind the Ebro; his subjects had not only broken into open revolt, but a French army of over 17,000 troops under Dupont had been forced to capitulate at Baylen, in Andalusia. Riots, assassinations, and massacres made it evident that the Spanish temper was considerably more dangerous than that of the Portuguese; it soon became obvious, moreover, that the people had employed some of their time in organizing, on a necessarily rough and ready principle, such forces as they possessed.

The inhabitants of the Asturias, in the north, were the first of the provincials to apply the torch to the tinder of revolt, after a riot in Madrid on the 2nd May 1808, and its Junta General called into being a levy of 18,000 men to protect the principality. It sent two deputies to England for assistance, which was readily given in money and military stores. Other provinces likewise selected Juntas, and Galicia also dispatched repre-



## 80      The Story of Wellington

sentatives to plead its cause in London. Galicia, adjoining the Asturias on the west, lost little time in following the warlike example of its neighbours, and the arsenals of Coruña and Ferrol, made memorable by the Trafalgar campaign, threw in their lot against Napoleon and contributed no fewer than thirty-two battalions of regulars and militia to the general forces. Leon and Old Castile also rose in rebellion, though with less energy. There were too many French in the Basque Provinces and Navarre for much to be attempted there. Coming still farther to the east, Catalonia sheltered 16,000 regulars and many irregular levies, but Aragon, Valencia, and Murcia were very weak. Andalusia, in the extreme south of the country, was almost as fortunately placed with regard to troops as Galicia, and the remains of the French fleet which had escaped Nelson and Collingwood were taken as they rode in Cadiz harbour.

There was nothing approaching united action, provinces and towns often vieing in more or less friendly rivalry. They did not understand, or if they understood they did not realize, that patriotic cliques do not make for strength. They fought for themselves rather than for the nation as a whole. Throughout the struggle we find a lack of cohesion.

When we come to look at the earliest available statistics <sup>1</sup> of the various Spanish armies which formed the front line, we find that their total strength in regulars, militia battalions, and newly-raised corps was 151,243. They were divided into five chief armies, namely, of Galicia, Aragon, Estremadura, the Centre, and Catalonia, under Generals Blake, Palafox, Galluzzo, Castaños, and Vives respectively. The troops of the second line numbered about 65,000, and included the Army of Granada, under Reding, the Army of Reserve of Madrid, commanded by San Juan, the Galician, Asturian, Estremaduran, Andalusian, Murcian and

<sup>1</sup> Oman, vol. i. pp. 631-639. Returns of October-November 1808.



## First Battles of the Peninsular War 81

Valencian reserves, and the 3000 odd men in garrison in the Balearic Isles.

The gross total of the French Army of Spain at this period dwarfs the above figures for all their brave show; it reached 314,612. From this must be deducted 32,643 detached troops and 37,844 in hospital or missing, making the "effective" no fewer than 244,125. Of the eight corps, Victor commanded the 1st, Bessières<sup>2</sup> the 2nd, Moncey the 3rd, Lefebvre the 4th, Mortier the 5th, Ney the 6th, St Cyr the 7th, and Junot the 8th. There were also Reserve Cavalry and Infantry, the Imperial Guard, troops marching from Germany, and National Guards inside the French frontier.<sup>1</sup>

When we consider that on the 31st May 1808 Napoleon had only 116,000 men in Spain and that within six months he had found it necessary to more than double that number, the desperate nature of the undertaking becomes plain.

To enter fully into the doings of the various armies throughout the war would deflect us far out of our proper course, but we shall hear of them whenever Wellesley was involved.

If you would know the ferocious spirit of the patriots, the hate they cherished for Napoleon and the French, you have only to turn to any one of the many Memoirs of men who fought in the Peninsular War. Captain, later Sir Harry, Smith, who was with Sir John Moore in 1808 and remained with Wellesley until March 1814, gives many instances in his vivacious "Autobiography,"<sup>3</sup> but the following must suffice. Smith's guide happened to be the owner of the house in which his wife and baggage were quartered in the village of Offala :

<sup>1</sup> Oman, vol. i. pp. 640-45.

<sup>2</sup> Succeeded by Soult in November 1808.

<sup>3</sup> "The Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith," 1787-1819. Edited by G. C. Moore Smith, M.A. (London Ed. 1910).

## 82      The Story of Wellington

“After I had dressed myself,” he relates, “he came to me and said, ‘When you dine, I have some capital wine, as much as you and your servants like; but,’ he says, ‘come down and look at my cellar.’ The fellow had been so civil, I did not like to refuse him. We descended by a stone staircase, he carrying a light. He had upon his countenance a most sinister expression. I saw something exceedingly excited him: his look became fiend-like. He and I were alone, but such confidence had we Englishmen in a Spaniard, and with the best reason, that I apprehended no personal evil. Still his appearance was very singular. When we got to the cellar-door, he opened it, and held the light so as to show the cellar; when, in a voice of thunder, and with an expression of demoniacal hatred and antipathy, pointing to the floor, he exclaimed, ‘There lie four of the devils who thought to subjugate Spain! I am a Navarrese. I was born free from all foreign invasion, and this right hand shall plunge this stiletto in my own heart as it did into theirs, ere I and my countrymen are subjugated!’ brandishing his weapon like a demon. I see the excited patriot as I write. Horror-struck as I was, the instinct of self-preservation induced me to admire the deed exceedingly, while my very frame quivered and my blood was frozen, to see the noble science of war and the honour and chivalry of arms reduced to the practices of midnight assassins. Upon the expression of my admiration, he cooled, and while he was deliberately drawing wine for my dinner, which, however strange it may be, I drank with the gusto its flavour merited, I examined the four bodies. They were Dragoons—four athletic, healthy-looking fellows. As we ascended, he had perfectly recovered the equilibrium of his vivacity and naturally good humour. I asked him how he, single-handed, had perpetrated this deed on four armed men (for their swords were by their sides). ‘Oh, easily enough. I pretended to love a French-

## First Battles of the Peninsular War 83

man' (or, in his words, 'I was an Afrancesado'), 'and I proposed, after giving them a good dinner, we should drink to the extermination of the English.' He then looked at me and ground his teeth. 'The French rascals, they little guessed what I contemplated. Well, we got into the cellar, and drank away until I made them so drunk, they fell, and my purpose was easily, and as joyfully, effected.' He again brandished his dagger, and said, 'Thus die all enemies to Spain.' Their horses were in his stable. When the French Regiment marched off, he gave these to some guerrillas in the neighbourhood. It is not difficult to reconcile with truth the assertion of the historian who puts down the loss of the French army, during the Spanish war, as 400,000 men, for more men fell in this midnight manner than by the broad-day sword, or the pestilence of climate, which in Spain, in the autumn, is excessive."

That there was considerable cause for complaint on the part of the Spaniards is also borne out by other eye-witnesses. Napier records that a captain and his company came across a peasant's hut and demanded provisions, as was their wont. The father explained that his children were half-starving, and he had but little food left. He was told that he would be hanged to a beam. Should he give a sign that he repented of his decision he would be cut down, but not otherwise. He was strung up without further ado. Then the cries of his wife and children overcame his noble act of self-sacrifice, and he was released. The soldiers then took every scrap of food in the miserable dwelling and departed. A similar method was adopted by a second body of plunderers, and when they could find nothing they spitefully killed the poor fellow, doubtless on the charge that he was hiding his stock.

Robert Blakeney, in noticing that most writers have referred to the Spanish army as "ragged, half-famished wretches," cautions us that the men themselves must not be blamed for their unkempt appear-

## 84      The Story of Wellington

ance. "The scandal and disgrace," he writes, "were the legitimate attributes of the Spanish Government. The members of the Cortez and Juntas were entirely occupied in speculation, amassing wealth for themselves and appointing their relatives and dependents to all places of power and emolument, however unworthy and unqualified; and although it was notorious that shiploads of arms, equipments, clothing, and millions of dollars were sent from England for the use and maintenance of the Spanish troops, yet all was appropriated to themselves by the members of the general or local governments or their rapacious satellites, while their armies were left barefoot, ragged and half-starved. In this deplorable state they were brought into the field under leaders, many of whom were scarcely competent to command a sergeant's outlying piquet; for in the Spanish army, as elsewhere, such was the undue influence of a jealous and covetous aristocracy, that, unsupported by their influence, personal gallantry and distinction, however conspicuous, were but rarely rewarded."<sup>1</sup> The same officer, who joined the 28th Regiment as a boy of fifteen and saw much service in the Peninsular War, assures us that "Courage was never wanting to the Spanish soldiers; but confidence in their chiefs was rare."<sup>2</sup>

An expedition against the American colonies of Spain had been mooted several times by the British Cabinet, and Sir Arthur Wellesley had reported on ways and means. The scheme had developed sufficiently for some 8000 troops to be assembled at Cork preparatory to embarking for the voyage. It was finally decided that the troops should be used for a descent on Portugal, with the immediate intention of expelling the French and raising the enthusiasm of the population against Napoleon.

<sup>1</sup> "A Boy in the Peninsular War," edited by Julian Sturgis (London, 1899), p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 311.



## First Battles of the Peninsular War 85

The force sailed on the 12th July 1808 with Wellesley, now a Lieutenant-General, in command.

John Wilson Croker, who served his country as Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830, dined with Sir Arthur and Lady Wellesley in Harley Street on the evening before the General set out for Cork. After settling some business connected with Ireland, Wellesley "seemed to lapse into a kind of reverie," his guest informs us, "and remained silent so long that I asked him what he was thinking of. He replied, 'Why, to say the truth, I am thinking of the French that I am going to fight. I have not seen them since the campaign in Flanders, when they were capital soldiers, and a dozen years of victory under Buonaparte must have made them better still. They have besides, it seems, a new system of strategy, which has out-manœuvred and overwhelmed all the armies of Europe. 'Tis enough to make one thoughtful; but no matter: my die is cast, they may overwhelm me, but I don't think they will out-manœuvre me. First, because I am not afraid of them, as everybody else seems to be; and secondly, because if what I hear of their system of manœuvres be true, I think it a false one as against steady troops. I suspect all the continental armies were more than half beaten before the battle was begun. I, at least, will not be frightened beforehand.'"

Wellesley made the voyage to Portugal in a fast frigate, and landed at Coruña on the 20th July 1808, ahead of his troops. This gave him sufficient time to make a preliminary study of the situation at first hand, and to be ready for immediate operations on the arrival of his men.

The first news he received was not encouraging, for it told of the battle of Medina de Rio Seco, which Bessières had won against the Army of Galicia on the 14th July. A little relief was afforded by rumours of success elsewhere, and "the arrival of the British money," speedily renewed the flagging spirits of the

## 86      The Story of Wellington

patriots who were fighting under such adverse conditions.

The Junta of Galicia, while keenly appreciative of gold, ammunition, and arms, showed no disposition to avail themselves of the Commander's services, and suggested his landing in the north of Portugal as the government of Oporto was collecting native troops in that neighbourhood. "The difference between any two men," Wellesley writes on the 21st July, the day before he sailed from Coruña, "is whether the one is a better or a worse Spaniard, and the better Spaniard is the one who detests the French most heartily. I understand that there is actually no French party in the country; and at all events I am convinced that no man now dares to show that he is a friend to the French."

To sum up the situation was not an arduous task for Wellesley. He came to the conclusion without further ado that the only reasonable way to assist the Spaniards was "to get possession of and organize a good army in Portugal." He proceeded to the fleet off Cape Finisterre, spent a few hours there, and then went to Oporto, where he had an important conference with the Bishop, who was also head of the Portuguese Junta, and a number of military officers. It was eventually decided that about 5300 troops, chiefly infantry, stationed at Coimbra under Bernardino Freire, should be used to co-operate with Wellesley, and that the remaining forces, namely, 12,000 peasants, should either be employed in the neighbourhood or in the province of Tras os Montes, where a French attack seemed probable. Finally a spot in Mondego Bay was chosen as the most suitable point for disembarkation, especially as it had the additional advantage of being near Coimbra. On the 1st August the business commenced, tiresome, and not unattended by danger because of the heavy surf.

Wellesley had much to think about while this was proceeding. He had just received the amazing news

## First Battles of the Peninsular War 87

that he had been superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple, with Sir Harry Burrard as second in command, that Sir John Moore was on his way with 10,000 men, and that he (Wellesley) and Lieut.-Generals the Hon. J. Hope, Sir E. Paget, and Mackenzie Frazer were to command divisions. Whatever agitation the new arrangements may have occasioned Wellesley, he did not allow it to shake his purpose or lessen his enthusiasm for the cause he had now so much at heart. He writes to Castlereagh, "Whether I am to command the army or not, or am to quit it, I shall do my best to insure its success; and you may depend upon it that I shall not hurry the operations, or commence them one moment sooner than they ought to be commenced, in order that I may acquire the credit of the success. The Government will determine for me what way they will employ me hereafter, whether here or elsewhere." He then goes on to sketch a campaign suitable for an army "of 30,000 Portuguese troops, which might be easily raised at an early period; and 20,000 British, including 4000 or 5000 cavalry."

"The weather was so rough and stormy," writes one of the soldiers of the 71st Regiment, "that we were not all landed until the 5th. On our leaving the ship, each man got four pound of biscuit, and four pound of salt beef cooked on board. We marched, for twelve miles, up to the knees in sand, which caused us to suffer much from thirst; for the marching made it rise and cover us. We lost four men of our regiment, who died of thirst. We buried them where they fell. At night we came to our camp ground [Lugar], in a wood, where we found plenty of water, to us more acceptable than anything besides on earth. We here built large huts, and remained four days. We again commenced our march alongst the coast, towards Lisbon. In our advance, we found all the villages deserted, except by the old and destitute. . . ."

On the night of the 8th, General Spencer and his



## 88      The Story of Wellington

corps of 4500 men joined Wellesley from Cadiz, where he had landed at the request of the Junta of Seville. By the 11th the whole army had arrived at Leiria, and on the following day it was augmented by 2300 of Freire's Portuguese troops, their commander refusing point blank to march with his remaining forces unless certain impossible demands were met. "My object," writes Wellesley, "is to obtain possession of Lisbon, and to that I must adhere, whatever may be the consequences, till I shall have attained it, as being the first and greatest step towards dispossessing the French of Portugal."

Meanwhile, Junot had sent instructions to Generals Loison and Delaborde to effect a junction and attack Wellesley. This was prevented by the timely arrival of the British troops at Leiria, for the former was some sixteen miles to the south-east and the latter about the same distance to the south-west. Wellesley was consequently between them. This necessitated Loison's return to the southward if he wished to join Delaborde, and the British General determined to prevent the operation. On the 14th, Wellesley was at Alcobaça, from whence the French had retreated but a few hours before.

Although a small engagement took place near Obidos, Wellesley did not offer battle until two days later because his whole force had not yet come up. The conflict occurred at Roliça, where Delaborde's army was awaiting him on a hill. We know that the allied force totalled 15,000; the strength of the enemy is uncertain, Wellesley believing it to be 6000, while Professor Oman<sup>1</sup> gives the figure as "about 4350 men," basing his conclusion on known official returns previous to the fight and making allowance for probable losses by sickness.

"On the morning of the 17th," says the eye-witness already quoted, "we were under arms an hour before day. Half an hour after sunrise, we observed the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 235 n.



## First Battles of the Peninsular War 89

enemy in a wood. We received orders to retreat. Having fallen back about two miles, we struck to the right, in order to come upon their flank, whilst the 9th, 29th, and 5th battalion of the 60th, attacked them in front. They had a very strong position on a hill. The 29th advanced up the hill, not perceiving an ambush of the enemy, which they had placed on each side of the road. As soon as the 29th was right between them, they gave a volley, which killed, or wounded, every man in the grenadier company, except seven. Unmindful of their loss, the regiment drove on, and carried the entrenchments.<sup>1</sup> The engagement lasted until about four o'clock, when the enemy gave way. We continued the pursuit, till darkness put a stop to it. The 71st had only one man killed and one wounded. We were manœuvring all day, to turn their flank; so that our fatigue was excessive, though our loss was but small."

Such was the battle of Roliça, Wellesley's first victory over the French. He was perfectly satisfied with the fighting and moral qualities of his men as displayed in this engagement.

"I cannot sufficiently applaud the conduct of the troops throughout this action," he tells Castlereagh. Although he had a superiority of strength, the number of soldiers "actually employed in the heat of the action," namely, 4635, was, "from unfavourable circumstances . . . by no means equal to that of the enemy." The returns showed 479 British killed, wounded, and missing, and the French about 600.

<sup>1</sup> The total loss of the regiment was 190, by far the heaviest of those engaged.

## CHAPTER VIII

# Victory Abroad, and Displeasure at Home

(1808-9)

*"From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step."*

NAPOLÉON.

WITH a mere handful of soldiers, Junot, big with ideas of a future kingship, and underestimating the strength and fighting powers of the enemy, left Lisbon and entered the field against Wellesley, whose troops were now encamped at Vimiero to cover the landing of 4000 additional men under Generals Anstruther and Acland. Having joined forces with the unfortunate Loison and Delaborde and thereby brought up the total strength of his army to 13,056 men, the Marshal prepared to attack.

Wellesley, who had over 18,000 troops, including 2000 Portuguese, was well prepared, nay eager, for the encounter, but, unfortunately for him, Burrard arrived on the evening of the 20th August. When Wellesley explained to him his scheme of operations he showed no disposition to fall in with it. Wellesley had wished Sir John Moore to proceed to Lisbon by land in order to cut off Junot's retreat, but the less-active Burrard would have none of it, and ordered him to wait until Moore's arrival. "Whether we advance or not," replied the General, "we shall have to fight.

## Victory Abroad Displeasure at Home 91

For the French will certainly attack us if we do not attack them."

This prophecy was fulfilled about 8 o'clock on the morning of the 21st August 1808, when squadrons of the enemy's cavalry appeared. An attack was made on the British advanced guard. The French were driven back at the point of the bayonet, while other troops, stationed in the churchyard of Vimiero, prevented them from reaching the village of that name, and Acland's brigade attacked them in flank. "A most desperate contest" was necessary before the enemy recoiled in confusion, during which they lost heavily in killed and wounded, and in *material* seven pieces of cannon. Other French troops, supported by a large body of cavalry, turned their attention to the heights on the road to Lourinhão, where Ferguson's brigade was stationed. The latter charged with praiseworthy coolness, and again there was a tale of disaster to tell when the enemy fell back, while half a dozen guns were captured. An attempt to recover part of the lost artillery resulted in the French being obliged to retire "with great loss."

Burrard, who had slept on the vessel which had brought him out, did not arrive on the field till late in the day, and took no part in the direction of the battle until Wellesley wished to pursue the enemy to Torres Vedras and cut them off from Lisbon. "Sir Harry," he said, "now is your time to advance, the enemy is completely beaten, and we shall be in Lisbon in three days." This his senior officer absolutely forbade. Had the former been allowed to follow his own wishes he believed that, "in all probability, the whole would have been destroyed." As it was, at least 1800 of the enemy were rendered *hors de combat*, including 300 or 400 troops who were made prisoners. The British lost in killed and missing 186 men, and 534 were wounded. The General was again delighted with the behaviour of his men, and in communicating with the Duke of

## 92      The Story of Wellington

York, he averred that "this is the only action I have ever been in, in which every thing passed as it was directed and no mistake was made by any of the Officers charged with its conduct."

One splendid incident, one altogether human touch, affords relief to the story of the battle of Vimiero. A piper of the gallant 71st Highlanders, severely wounded in the thigh and deeply in need of surgical aid, continued to blow his pibroch for the encouragement of his colleagues, until exhaustion finally conquered his determined spirit. Seated on the ground he declared that "the lads should nae want music to their wark," and went on with his weird music as though parading within the walls of Edinburgh Castle.

"I afterwards saw him," relates Lieut.-General Sir William Warre, "in a hovel, where we collected the wounded . . . both French and English. I shook him by the hand, and told him I was very sorry to see so fine a fellow so badly hurt; he answered, 'Indeed, captain, I fear I am done for, but there are some of those poor fellows,' pointing to the French, 'who are very bad indeed.'"

Such coolness, typified in successive instances, although not always under such conditions,<sup>1</sup> has made our Empire what it is to-day. The "common" British soldier, sowing the highway with his bones, enables a later generation to reap a golden harvest.

It is due to the French to record that they were not without men equally as cool as Piper Mackay. A typical example is furnished by Major Ross-Lewin, who fought in the 32nd, and it occurred immediately after the battle of Vimiero:

"An officer of my regiment," he relates, "happened to pass near an old French soldier, who was seated by the roadside, covered with dust, and desperately wounded; a cannon-shot had taken off both his feet just above the ankles, but his legs were so swollen

<sup>1</sup> The case of Peter Findlater at Dargai is almost an exact parallel.





The Gallant Piper at Vimiera  
Thomas Maybank



## Victory Abroad Displeasure at Home 93

that his wounds bled but little. On seeing the officer, the poor fellow addressed him, saying, '*Monsieur, je vous conjure donnez moi mes pieds.*' and at the same time pointed to his feet, which lay on the road beyond his reach. His request met with a ready compliance. The pale, toilworn features of the veteran brightened up for an instant on receiving these mutilated members, which had borne him through many a weary day, and which it grieved him to see trampled on by the victorious troops that passed; and then, as if prepared to meet his fast-approaching fate becomingly, by the attainment of this one poor wish, he laid them tranquilly beside him, and, with a look of resignation, and the words, '*Je suis content,*' seemed to settle himself for death."

Many years afterwards, when in a reminiscent mood, the Duke of Wellington recapitulated the events of the 21st August 1808. "The French," he told his guests, "came on at Vimiero with more confidence, and seemed to *feel their way* less than [smiling] I always found them to do *afterwards*. They came on in their usual way, in a very heavy column, and I received them in line, which they were not accustomed to, and we repulsed them there several times, and at last they went off beaten on all points, while I had half the army untouched and ready to pursue; but Sir H. Burrard—who had joined the army in about the middle of the battle, but seeing all doing so well, had desired me to continue in the command now that he considered the battle as won, though I thought it but half done—resolved to push it no further. I begged very hard that he would go on, but he said enough had been done. Indeed, if he had come earlier, the battle would not have taken place at all, for when I waited on him on board the frigate in the bay the evening before, he desired me to suspend all operations, and said he would do nothing till he had collected all the force which he knew to be on the way. He had heard of

## 94      The Story of Wellington

Moore's arrival, but the French luckily resolving to attack us, led to a different result. I came from the frigate about nine at night, and went to my own quarters with the army, which, from the nearness of the enemy, I naturally kept on the alert. In the dead of the night a fellow came in—a German sergeant, or quartermaster—in a great fright—so great that his hair seemed actually to stand on end—who told me that the enemy was advancing rapidly, and would be soon on us. I immediately sent round to the generals to order them to get the troops under arms, and soon after the dawn of day we were vigorously attacked. The enemy were first met by the (50th ?), not a good-looking regiment, but devilish steady, who received them admirably, and brought them to a full stop immediately, and soon drove them back ; they then tried two other attacks . . . one very serious, through a valley on our left ; but they were defeated everywhere, and completely repulsed, and in full retreat by noon, so that we had time enough to have *finished them* if I could have persuaded Sir H. Burrard to go on."

On the day following the battle of Vimiero, Dalrymple arrived. While pondering over the situation he received a proposal for an armistice from Junot, which developed into the Convention of Cintra, preliminarily signed on the 30th August 1808. The most important conditions were—the surrender of all places and forts in Portugal occupied by the French troops, the evacuation of the country, and the transport of the army, its munitions and "property," to France in British ships. By a strange oversight the important question of future service was overlooked, consequently there was nothing to prevent an early return of the troops to the Peninsula should Napoleon think fit for them to do so.

We have now to consider Wellesley's part in this much discussed transaction. The Convention was definitely signed on the 30th August 1808, but previous



## Victory Abroad Displeasure at Home 95

to this a meeting of the General Officers was called to deliberate upon it. "The result of the meeting," Wellesley writes on the 29th inst., "was a proposal to make certain alterations, which I acknowledge I do not think sufficient, although the treaty will answer in its amended form. . . . At the same time I must say that I approve of allowing the French to evacuate Portugal, because I see clearly that we cannot get them out of Portugal otherwise, under existing circumstances, without such an arrangement; and we should be employed in the blockade or siege of the places which they would occupy during the season in which we ought and might be advantageously employed against the French in Spain. But the Convention, by which they should be allowed to evacuate Portugal, ought to be settled in the most honorable manner to the army by which they have been beaten; and we ought not to be kept for 10 days on our field of battle before the enemy (who sued on the day after the action) is brought to terms.

"I am quite annoyed on this subject."

Wellesley signed the preliminary Memorandum at the request of Dalrymple, but had nothing to do with the final settlement. "I lament the situation of our affairs as much as you do," he writes on the 5th September, "and I did every thing in my power to prevent it; but my opinion was overruled. I had nothing to do with the Convention as it now stands; and I have never seen it to this moment. . . . I have only to regret that I put my name to an agreement of which I did not approve, and which I did not negotiate: if I had not done it, I really believe that they would not have dared to make such a Convention as they have made: notwithstanding that that agreement was never ratified, and is now so much waste paper."<sup>1</sup>

His letters at this period teem with allusions to the

<sup>1</sup> See also some remarks in "The Croker Papers," vol. ii. pp. 121-22.

## 96      The Story of Wellington

unfortunate treaty. He tells Castlereagh that "It is quite impossible for me to continue any longer with this army ; and I wish, therefore, that you would allow me to return home and resume the duties of my office, if I should still be in office, and it is convenient to the Government that I should retain it ; or if not, that I should remain upon the Staff in England ; or, if that should not be practicable, that I should remain without employment. You will hear from others of the various causes which I must have for being dissatisfied, not only with the military and other public measures of the Commander-in-Chief, but with his treatment of myself. I am convinced it is better for him, for the army, and for me, that I should go away ; and the sooner I go the better."

On the 6th October Wellesley was in London, and at once resumed his office as Chief Secretary for Ireland. The newspapers teemed with unsavory references to the unpopular Convention ; the caricaturists, not to be rivalled by their journalistic brethren, produced the grossest lampoons for the benefit of the indignant public. In one of them Wellesley and his colleagues are hanging on gibbets, in another the former is shown urging his troops to glory :

*This is Sir Arthur (whose valour and skill, began so well, but ended so ill)  
Who beat the French, who took the Gold, that lay in the City of Lisbon.*

Windham, writing in his Diary under date of the 16th September, probably sums up the thoughts of most British statesmen of the time : "At Chesterford heard report of news ; said to be excellent, but without particulars. Feasted upon the hopes of what I should meet at Hockrill. Alas ! *quanti de spe decidi !* it was the news of the convention with Junot. *There never was surely such a proceeding in the history of wars or negotiations.* There is no bearing the thought of it."

A Court of Inquiry was instituted. Dalrymple and Burrard were recalled, and together with Wellesley,

## Victory Abroad Displeasure at Home 97

were examined before a board of officers, which included General David Dundas and Lord Moira, at Chelsea Hospital. The finding of the Court was non-committal "respecting the fitness of the Convention in the relative situation of the two armies," doubtless because a unanimous "verdict" could not be arrived at, but the members definitely declared "that unquestionable zeal and firmness appear throughout to have been exhibited by Lieut.-Generals Sir Hew Dalrymple, Sir Harry Burrard, and Sir Arthur Wellesley. . . ." In commenting on the judgment thus expressed, Sir Herbert Maxwell notes that the two senior officers were never employed again, adding, "Similar eclipse might have fallen upon Sir Arthur, but for the efforts of Castlereagh and other powerful friends, whose confidence in their General was never shaken."

In the following January (1809) the House of Lords and the House of Commons expressed their thanks to General Wellesley for the victories of Roliça and Vimiero.

"It is your praise," said the Speaker in the Commons, "to have inspired your troops with unshaken confidence and unbounded ardour; to have commanded, not the obedience alone, but the hearts and affections of your companions in arms; and, having planned your operations with the skill and promptitude which have so eminently characterized all your former exertions, you have again led the armies of your country to battle, with the same deliberate valour and triumphant success which have long since rendered your name illustrious in the remotest parts of this Empire.

"Military glory has ever been dear to this nation; and great military exploits, in the field or upon the ocean, have their sure reward in Royal favour and the gratitude of Parliament. It is, therefore, with the highest satisfaction, that, in this fresh instance, I now proceed to deliver to you the thanks of this House. . . ."

Wellesley's reply was made in three well-chosen

## 98      The Story of Wellington

sentences, without the slightest attempt at rhetoric. In the House of Lords Vimiero was spoken of as "a signal victory, honorable and glorious to the British arms." The resolutions of the peers, which included high appreciation of the behaviour of the non-commissioned officers and privates, were conveyed to Sir Arthur by the Lord Chancellor, and acknowledged by their recipient in a short letter, the most important paragraphs of which are as follows :

"I have received the mark of distinction which the House of Lords have conferred upon me with sentiments of gratitude and respect proportionate to the high sense I entertain of the greatness of the honor which it carries with it ; and I shall have great pleasure in communicating to the Officers and the troops the distinguished reward of their exemplary conduct which their Lordships have conferred upon them.

"I beg leave, at the same time, to express to their Lordships my thanks for the expressions of personal civility with which your Lordship has conveyed to me the commands of the House."

These signs of approval must have been entirely satisfactory to Sir Arthur after the bitter criticisms of the previous months, but what he particularly valued was a handsome service of plate, worth intrinsically £1000, but sentimentally beyond price, presented to him by the brigadier and field officers who were associated with him in the victory at Vimiero. They, at any rate, had implicit faith in their General.



## CHAPTER IX

### Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal

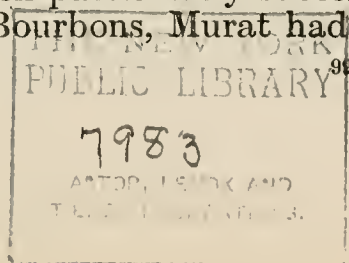
(1809)

*"We are not naturally a military people; the whole business of an army upon service is foreign to our habits, and is a constraint upon them, particularly in a poor country like this."*

WELLINGTON.

**B**ARON DE FRÉNILLY, travelling to Paris in December 1808, notes that "the roads along which we passed were crowded with splendid troops who were on their way to find a grave in the Peninsula." Napoleon, in the Constitution he granted to Spain, assumes for himself not only the so-called "divine right of kings," but the special favour of Providence. "God," he says, "has given me the power and the will to overcome all obstacles." Frénilly, writing after the Emperor's death, merely states an historical fact; Napoleon, at the height of his stupendous power, regards himself as omnipotent, and proves within a few years that he is not.

Yet it must be conceded that the Dictator of Europe—apart from moral considerations, which never troubled him to any extent—had a certain right to infer from his past experience that the Almighty was on his side. It was not for him to foresee that the Peninsula was to prove a running sore of the Imperial body politic. To be sure, Joseph had not been particularly successful on the throne of the Spanish Bourbons, Murat had dis-



## 100      The Story of Wellington

played many foolish qualities, Dupont had surrendered, Junot had evacuated Portugal, and eleven millions had rebelled either practically or theoretically against French domination, but there was still himself, and God was "on the side of the heaviest battalions!" "I may find in Spain the Pillars of Hercules, but not the limits of my power." Thus he endeavoured to encourage his brother, and there is no reason to suspect that he imagined otherwise. He announced that he would pour between 300,000 and 400,000 troops across the Pyrenees—he actually began the new campaign with over 200,000, which compared more than favourably with the 120,000 ill-organized patriots under Castaños, Palafox, Vives, Belvedere, Blake, and La Romana, who usually acted without any idea of the value of co-operation.

The number of those ready and willing to engage in a guerilla warfare cannot be given.<sup>1</sup> Statistics fail in such a matter as this. Names indelibly associated with Napoleon's greatness were either present or coming—Victor, Bessières, Moncey, Lefebvre, Ney, St Cyr, Mortier, and Junot.

When Dalrymple, Burrard, and Wellesley sailed from Portugal the British command devolved upon Sir John Moore. This being a biography of Wellington, Moore's astounding campaign can only be referred to in the briefest way, but it is necessary to mention the more important incidents if we are to understand the various phases of the war. Leaving 9000 men at Lisbon with Lieutenant-General Sir John Cradock, and taking with him 14,000 troops, Moore advanced into Spain to co-operate with the Spaniards according to his instructions. His own columns reached Salamanca, the point of concentration, in November 1808, but Baird, who, with a reinforcement of 13,000 men, was

<sup>1</sup> As to the merits and demerits of national resistance, see some wise remarks in Arnold's "Introductory Lectures on Modern History," pp. 158-64.

## Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal 101

to effect a junction with him, found it impossible to do so. There was much delay in consequence.

In the first week of the following month the Emperor was at Madrid, and the Spanish capital once again in the hands of the French. Disaster after disaster had followed hard in the tracks of the national forces.

It was Moore's hope that by slowly retreating northward the enemy would follow, and thus enable his allies in the south to recover. Having united with Baird, and learned that Soult, with not more than 20,000, was near Sahagun, Moore was on the eve of combat when the startling intelligence reached him that Napoleon was in pursuit. The Emperor had told the Senate, "I am determined to carry on the war with the utmost activity, and to destroy the armies that England has disembarked in that country." With wonderful promptitude Moore turned towards Coruña, where he believed the British fleet awaited him. Napoleon, hearing disconcerting news from Paris, made off for his capital, leaving Soult, "the Iron Duke of France," and Ney to pursue the red-coats.

On the 16th January 1809, the battle in which Moore received his death-wound was fought. Within twenty-four hours the victorious troops embarked for the homeland. Not a British soldier, other than deserters or stragglers, was left in Spain. In the sister kingdom there were some 12,000, of whom 9000 had been left at Lisbon by Moore when he had set out for Salamanca; the remainder had arrived from England in the previous November and December. In addition, Sir Robert Wilson had succeeded in equipping some 1300 men at Oporto for his Loyal Lusitanian Legion.

It soon became evident that war would shortly break out between France and Austria, thus precluding any thought on Napoleon's part of going back to the Peninsula. Castlereagh, notwithstanding previous experiences, was as enthusiastic as ever. Baird and his ragged troops were no sooner home than it was

## 102      The Story of Wellington

remarked that the Secretary for War and Wellesley were very frequently together. Wiseacres foretold an early return of the latter to Spain and Portugal.

Sir Arthur prepared a lengthy Memorandum on the defence of Portugal, which was placed in the hands of the Cabinet for careful consideration. "I have always been of opinion," it begins, "that Portugal might be defended, whatever might be the result of the contest in Spain; and that in the meantime the measures adopted for the defence of Portugal would be highly useful to the Spaniards in their contest with the French."

Wellesley suggested the thorough reorganization of the native Portuguese troops, part of the expense being borne by Great Britain, and the employment of not less than 30,000 British troops, including 4000 or 5000 cavalry and a large body of artillery. The entire army was to be commanded by British officers. Riflemen and 3000 British or German cavalry should be sent as additional reinforcements as soon as possible, in addition to a corps of engineers for an army of 60,000. He perfectly understood that the French would not be caught napping, for "it may be depended upon that as soon as the newspapers shall have announced<sup>1</sup> the departure of Officers for Portugal, the French armies in Spain will receive orders to make their movements towards Portugal, so as to anticipate our measures for its defence. We ought therefore to have every thing on the spot, or nearly so, before any alarm is created at home respecting our intentions."

Thanks in no small measure to Castlereagh, Wellesley was appointed to the supreme command of the new

<sup>1</sup> See also some pregnant remarks in Wellesley's dispatch dated Badajoz, 21st November 1809. It will be remembered that at the time of the Russian-Japanese war, newspaper men were wisely precluded from publishing particulars of proposed movements and similar intelligence likely to be of service to the enemy. During the recent conflict between Italy and Turkey the most rigid censorship was exercised by the former Power.



## Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal 103

expedition. He left England on the 14th April 1809, a few weeks after Soult's vanguard had crossed the Portuguese frontier, and landed at Lisbon on the 22nd, after a most eventful voyage, having encountered terrible weather off the Isle of Wight which threatened to drive his vessel ashore. The Commander-in-Chief thus sums up the situation in the Peninsula: "At that time," he says, "the French had got possession of Zaragoza, Marshal Soult held Oporto and the northern provinces of Portugal. The battle of Medellin had been fought on the 29th March; and General Cuesta was endeavouring to recover from its effects, and to collect an army again at Monasterio, in the mountains of the Sierra Morena. The French, under Marshal Victor, were in possession of the Guadiana, and had their advanced posts as forward as Los Santos. Sebastiani was at Ciudad Real, and held in check the army of La Carolina, at that time under the command of General Venegas, consisting of about 12,000 men. Ney was in possession of Galicia; Salamanca was held by a small detachment of French troops; St Cyr was at Catalonia with his corps of 25,000 men; and Kellermann, who had succeeded to Bessières in the command of the 6th corps, was at Valladolid. Mortier, with his corps,<sup>1</sup> and the Duc d'Abrantès (Junot), with the 8th corps, at Zaragoza. The Portuguese army was totally disorganized, and nearly annihilated; and the Spanish troops were scarcely able to hold their positions in the Sierra Morena. The Marquis de la Romana, who had been with his corps on the frontiers of Portugal, near Chaves, from the period of the embarkation of the British army at Coruña, in the month of January, till the month of March, had moved from thence when Soult invaded Portugal by Chaves, and afterwards moved towards the Asturias with his army, and went himself into that province."

<sup>1</sup> "I rather think that Mortier had removed from Zaragoza; but some time elapsed before he arrived in Old Castile."—Note by Wellesley.

## 104      The Story of Wellington

The greeting the Commander-in-Chief received at the hands of the populace of Lisbon would have been embarrassing to one possessing a less cool head, but Wellesley knew perfectly well that applause to-day is apt to become condemnation to-morrow. He was appointed Marshal-General in the Portuguese Army, which was now placed in the capable hands of General Beresford by the British Cabinet, Wellesley's one second-in-command being Major-General Rowland Hill. According to his instructions, "the defence of Portugal you will consider as the first and immediate object of your attention. But, as the security of Portugal can only be effectually provided for in connection with the defence of the Peninsula in the larger sense, his Majesty on this account, as well as from the unabated interest he takes in the cause of Spain, leaves it to your judgment to decide, when your army shall be advanced on the frontier of Portugal, how your efforts can be best combined with the Spanish, as well as the Portuguese troops, in support of the common cause. In any movements you may undertake, you will, however, keep in mind that, until you receive further orders, your operations must necessarily be conducted with especial reference to the protection of that country."

Of British troops the Commander-in-Chief now had at his disposal 23,455, namely, 18,935 infantry, 4270 cavalry, and 250 attached to the wagon train; Portugal contributed 16,000 men. Costello, a non-commissioned officer of the 95th Rifles, and later a Captain in the British Legion, has nothing good to say of the Portuguese troops. In his record of the Peninsular War<sup>1</sup> he gives several instances of their unreliability and treacherous nature. One example must suffice:

"The sanguinary nature of the Portuguese," he says, "during the whole period of the war was notorious. When crossed or excited, nothing but the shedding of

<sup>1</sup> "The Adventures of a Soldier," by Edward Costello.

## Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal 105

blood could allay their passion. It was always with the greatest difficulty that we could preserve our French prisoners from being butchered by them, even in cold blood. They would hang upon the rear of a detachment with prisoners, like so many carrion birds, waiting every opportunity to satiate their love of vengeance, and it required all the firmness and vigilance of our troops to keep them in check. It was well known that even our men fell in stepping between them and the French whom they had marked out as victims. Indeed, it was not unfrequent for our men to suffer from the consequences of their ferocity, and I myself, while at Vallée, had a narrow escape. I had crossed the hills to purchase some necessaries at the quarters of the 52nd Regiment, and on my return fell in with several of the soldiers of the 3rd Caçadores. One of them, a fierce-looking scoundrel, evinced a great inclination to quarrel, the more particularly as he perceived that I was unarmed and alone. Having replied rather sharply to some abuse they had cast upon the English, by reflecting on their countrymen in return, he flew into a rage, drew his bayonet, and made a rush at me, which I avoided by stepping aside, and tripping him head foremost on the ground. I was in the act of seizing his bayonet, when a number of his comrades came up, to whom he related, in exaggerated terms, the cause of our disagreement. Before he had half concluded, a general cry arose of 'Kill the English dog'; and the whole, drawing their bayonets, were advancing upon me when a party of the 52nd came up, the tables were turned, and the Caçadores fled in all directions."

Wellesley at once prepared to advance, and had not been at Lisbon a week before representations were made to him by the Junta of Spanish Estremadura for aid in behalf of the southern provinces. He replied that until "the enemy who has invaded Portugal shall have been removed" he could not hope to lend them



## 106      The Story of Wellington

the requisite assistance. "The enemy" consisted of the corps under Soult and Victor. The army of the former, which had left Coruña and invaded Portugal by Napoleon's imperative orders, now occupied Oporto. This, the second city in the kingdom and the centre of the most prosperous district, fell after a gallant if unscientific resistance on the part of the inhabitants under the Bishop. The Marshal took dire vengeance on the insurgents during the journey from Galicia, perhaps because he had suffered from the guerilla warfare, now almost universal throughout the Peninsula. Victor's army was to take Badajoz and afterwards Seville, while Sebastiani held the south in check. Wellesley decided to attack Soult, which necessitated a march of over eighty miles of difficult country. Leaving two small detachments of his own and of Portuguese troops upon the Tagus to watch the movements of Victor, he set out with 13,000 British, 9000 Portuguese, and 3000 Germans—25,000 in all.

The right column, consisting of 9000 men under Beresford, was sent to Lamego, on the Douro, so as to be ready to cut off Soult's retreat, the left making for Oporto with Wellesley. On the 10th May the cavalry and advanced guard of the latter crossed the Vouga, hoping to surprise the French troops at Albergaria and the neighbouring villages, but the movement was not completely successful, although a number of prisoners and cannon were taken.

The advanced guard reached Vendas Novas on the following day, and drove in the outposts of the French advanced guard. The latter were vigorously attacked in the woods and village, and defeated with considerable loss. All this augured well for the ensuing operations, and on the 12th the vanguard reached the southern bank of the Douro. The French were stationed on the opposite bank, having taken the precaution to burn the bridge after crossing, and to withdraw all the boats they could discover.



## Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal 107

Unfortunate in this matter, Wellesley was favoured in another. His army was screened by cliffs and a hill called the Serra. This bold rock was surmounted by a Franciscan convent, where the Commander posted batteries and made his observations. As the river winds a great deal, his movements were unobserved by those on the look-out at the French headquarters, to the left of Wellesley as he peered through his glass across the wide waterway. He had already perceived an extensive building, known as the Seminary, surrounded by high walls with but one entrance on the landward side, and open to the river. This he knew would be an excellent position to secure, especially as it was almost opposite to him.

There was in the army a certain Colonel Waters, a keen-eyed officer with an infinite amount of resource and a ready wit. He contended that it was scarcely probable that Soult could have secured every boat, and interrogated a refugee on the point. He found that the man had crossed in a small skiff.<sup>1</sup> With the aid of the prior of Amarante, the fugitive, and several peasants, he heaved the boat out of the mud, and, crossing the stream, brought back a number of barges. In these three companies of the Buffs, under Lieut.-General Paget, effected a landing on the opposite side. This excellent officer was seriously wounded almost immediately afterward, but the passage of the Douro had been secured.

General Murray, who had been ordered to cross at Barca d'Avintas, also managed to get over, and signally failed to check the retiring columns after the battle. As additional troops gained the opposite shore the French made repeated attempts to hurl

<sup>1</sup> Oman, vol. ii. p. 334. This disposes of the often-repeated story that Waters discovered the little craft in the reeds. Brailmont, for instance, says that the Colonel "suddenly darted off from the throng," and half an hour later the skiff "shot out into the deep" with six men on board.

## 108      The Story of Wellington

them back, but were ultimately obliged to retreat "in the utmost confusion" towards Amarante. According to a letter from General Stewart to his brother, Lord Castlereagh, the French fled with such haste that "Sir Arthur Wellesley dined at their headquarters on the dinner which had been prepared for Marshal Soult."

On the 19th May, Soult was across the frontier, having been compelled to abandon over fifty guns and his baggage. In making his way across the Sierra Catalina to escape the pursuing troops, his rear-guard was defeated at Salamonde, with severe loss. He eventually reached Orense, in Galicia, minus some 5000 men, including the sick and wounded he had left behind him in Oporto.

"The road from Penafiel to Montealegre," says Wellesley, "is strewn with the carcasses of horses and mules, and of French soldiers, who were put to death by the peasantry before our advanced guard could save them. This last circumstance is the natural effect of the species of warfare which the enemy have carried on in this country. Their soldiers have plundered and murdered the peasantry at their pleasure; and I have seen many persons hanging in the trees by the sides of the road, executed for no reason that I could learn, excepting that they have not been friendly to the French invasion and usurpation of the government of their country; and the route of their column, on their retreat, could be traced by the smoke of the villages to which they set fire."

Within a fortnight Wellesley was writing of the defects of his own men. "I have long been of opinion," he says, "that a British army could bear neither success nor failure, and I have had manifest proofs of the truth of this opinion in the first of its branches in the recent conduct of the soldiers of this army. They have plundered the country most terribly, which has given me the greatest concern. . . .

## Sir Arthur's Return to Portugal 109

“They have plundered the people of bullocks, among other property, for what reason I am sure I do not know, except it be, as I understand is their practice, to sell them to the people again. I shall be very much obliged to you if you will mention this practice to the Ministers of the Regency, and bid them to issue a proclamation forbidding the people, in the most positive terms, to purchase any thing from the soldiers of the British army.”

The Commander-in-Chief relates the same terrible facts to Castlereagh. “The army behave terribly ill,” is his expression. “They are a rabble who cannot bear success any more than Sir J. Moore’s army could bear failure. I am endeavoring to tame them; but, if I should not succeed, I must make an official complaint of them, and send one or two corps home in disgrace. They plunder in all directions.”

Meanwhile Victor, far from taking Badajoz and marching on Seville as the Emperor wished, had found it necessary to move in the direction of Madrid, where he could secure much needed assistance. He therefore took up his position at Talavera. Wellesley, intent upon crushing him, arrived at Abrantes about the same time as the Marshal was evacuating Estremadura and consequently abandoning the fruits of his victory over Cuesta at Medellin. For Wellesley to have followed Victor with the relatively few men at his disposal would have been to court disaster, and he therefore acquiesced in a new plan of operations suggested by Cuesta, in which the Spaniards were to be given an opportunity of showing their capabilities or proving their incapacity. This, says Professor Oman, was “the first and only campaign which he ever undertook in company with a Spanish colleague and without supreme control over the whole conduct of affairs.”

## CHAPTER X

### Talavera

(1809)

*"The battle of Talavera was the hardest fought of modern times."*

WELLINGTON.

THE potentialities of the new project were distinctly promising. After uniting with Cuesta, Wellesley was to follow the course of the Tagus and cut off Victor's army of 33,000 troops while the attention of Sebastiani and Joseph Bonaparte, who had but 17,000 men all told, was occupied by Venegas.

When last heard of Soult and Ney were in Galicia busily engaged in suppressing an insurrection, so no opposition was anticipated from them. In this matter after events proved the facts to be far different from the surmise. There seemed every likelihood of a successful issue provided there was no snapping of individual links of the chain of operations. Wellesley did not find Cuesta a particularly affable colleague, but he was not the man to assert his own opinion unless he thought it imperative. He characterized him as having "no military genius," which is certainly more favourable than "that deformed-looking lump of pride, ignorance, and treachery," which is the description given to us by Costello. "He was," the latter adds, "the most murderous-looking old man I ever saw." They came together at Oropesa on the 20th July, their forces



totalling 55,000, of which 35,000 were Spanish. It was the task of Venegas and his 26,000 men to approach Madrid from the south, and, by a demonstration in force, distract the attention of Sebastiani. He proved far too slow, and ere he was able to interfere, Victor, Sebastiani, and Joseph concentrated in the neighbourhood of Toledo. On the 26th July the last batch of their 50,000 troops came together.

Had Wellesley been allowed to attack on the 23rd July, as he wished, it is probable that he would have crushed Victor, whose reinforcements did not begin to arrive until the following day. Cuesta had already shown his incompetency, and some of his advanced guard had been roughly handled by a French cavalry division. It was Wellesley's opinion that the psychological moment had arrived, but the Spanish commander objected. "Had we fought then," Wellesley afterwards averred, "it would have been as great a battle as Waterloo, and would have cleared Spain of the French for that time." The formidable task before him was not made lighter by the knowledge that the commissariat and transport arrangements had utterly broken down.

At Talavera, evacuated by Victor, who moved a few miles to the east, Wellesley was obliged to halt, and even threatened to withdraw from Spain because of the ill-treatment accorded his famishing troops. "I have never seen an army," he says, "so ill-treated in any country, or, considering that all depends upon its operations, one which deserved good treatment so much. It is ridiculous to pretend that the country cannot supply our wants. The French army is well fed, and the soldiers who are taken in good health, and well supplied with bread, of which indeed they left a small magazine behind them. This is a rich country in corn, in comparison with Portugal, and yet, during the whole of my operations in that country, we never wanted bread but on one day on the frontiers of Galicia. In the Vera de Plasencia there are means to supply this army

## 112      The Story of Wellington

for 4 months, as I am informed, and yet the *alcaldes* have not performed their engagements with me. The Spanish army has plenty of every thing, and we alone, upon whom every thing depends, are actually starving.”

After considerable trouble Cuesta consented to Wellesley assuming supreme command of the combined forces. On the afternoon of the 27th the British General mounted his horse and, accompanied by his staff, rode out of the town to an old *château*, known as the Casa de Salinas. His object was to obtain a bird's-eye view from the roof of the movements of the enemy on the Alberche. He apprehended no danger, because Spanish troops occupied the adjacent woods. In this he was deceived, for a number of French *tirailleurs* suddenly appearing, the troops beat a hasty retreat. The Commander-in-Chief jumped from the wall and regained his horse not a moment too soon. Had it not been for the near presence of a body of English infantry, who immediately opened fire, it is extremely probable that Wellington and his staff would have been captured.

At five o'clock the opposing forces were within touch, the French having crossed the river and driven in the British piquets, who lost about 400 men.

One of the finest descriptions of the ensuing battle—or more correctly, series of battles—is that of Captain M. de Rocca, a French officer of Hussars, which has the advantage of giving the point of view of the enemy, and how Wellesley was regarded by one at least of his combatants.

“The Spaniards,” he says, “were posted in a situation deemed impregnable, behind old walls and garden-fences, which border and encompass the city of Talavera.<sup>1</sup> Their right was defended by the Tagus, and their left joined the English, near a redoubt constructed on an eminence. The ground in front of the Anglo-Spanish armies was very unequal, and intersected

<sup>1</sup> At the approach of the enemy no fewer than 6000 Spaniards took to their heels and played no part in the battle.

here and there by ravines, formed by the rains of winter. The whole extent of their position was covered by the channel of a pretty deep torrent, at that time dry. The English left was strengthened by a conical eminence that commanded the greater part of the field of battle, and which was separated by a deep extensive valley from the Castilian chain of mountains.

“This eminence was thus in a manner the key to the enemy’s position, and against this decisive point of attack, an experienced general, possessed of that intuitive glance which insures success, would immediately have led the principal part of his disposable force, to obtain possession of it. He would either have taken it by assault, or have turned it by the valley. But King Joseph, when he should have acted, was seized with an unfortunate spirit of indecision and uncertainty. He attempted only half measures, he distributed his forces partially, and lost the opportunity of conquering while feeling the way for it. Marshal Jourdan, the second in command, had not that spur of patriotism in the Spanish war, which inspired him when he fought in the plains of Fleurus, to achieve the independence of France.

“The French commenced the engagement by a cannonade and rifle-fire in advance of their right; and they despatched a single battalion only, and some sharp-shooters, by the valley, to take the eminence which defended the English left, never thinking they would do otherwise than yield. This battalion, however, having to contend with superior numbers, was repulsed with loss, and compelled to retire. A division of dragoons, which had gone to reconnoitre Talavera, found the approaches to that city strongly fortified with artillery, and could not advance.

“At nightfall, the French made another attempt to gain the hill. A regiment of infantry, followed at a short distance by two others, attacked the extreme left of the English with unexampled ardour, arrived at the summit of the hill, and took possession of it. But having



## 114 The Story of Wellington

been fiercely assaulted, in its turn, by an entire division of the English, just, when having conquered, it was breathless with exertion, it was immediately obliged to give way. One of the two regiments, commanded to assist in this attack, had lost its way in a wood on account of the darkness; the other not getting soon enough over the ravine, which covered the enemy's position, had not arrived in time.

"Both these attacks had miscarried, though conducted with intrepid bravery, because they had been made by an inadequate number of troops. A single battalion had been sent, and then one division, when a great proportion of the whole army should have been despatched. These unsuccessful attempts revealed to the English what we designed next day; and still more evidently demonstrated the importance of the station they held. They passed the greater part of the night in fortifying it with artillery.

"The sun rose next morning on the two armies drawn up in battle order, and again the cannonade commenced. The defence of Portugal being entrusted to the English army, the fate of that country, and, perhaps, of all the Peninsula, was now to be decided by this contest. The veterans of the first and fourth French corps, accustomed for years to conquer throughout Europe, and always to witness their ardour seconded by the combined skill of their chiefs, burned with impatience for orders to engage, and thought to overthrow all before them by one well conjoined assault.

"One division alone, of three regiments of infantry, was sent by the valley to storm the position, of which we had, for a moment, obtained possession the preceding evening. After considerable loss, this division reached the top of the eminence, and was just about taking it. One of the regiments had already advanced as far as the artillery, when their charge was repulsed, and the whole division was forced to retire. The English, apprehending by this renewed attack that the French



designed to turn their left by the valley, stationed their cavalry there ; and caused a division of the Spaniards to occupy the skirts of the high Castilian mountains beyond it. The French receded to the ground they first occupied. The cannonade continued for another hour, and then became gradually silent. The overpowering heat of mid-day obliged both armies to suspend the combat, and observe a kind of involuntary truce, during which the wounded were removed.

“ King Joseph, having at last gone himself to reconnoitre the enemy’s position, gave orders, at four o’clock, for a general attack against the army of England. A division of dragoons was left to observe the Spaniards in the direction of Talavera. General Sebastiani’s corps marched against the right of the English, while Marshal Victor’s three divisions of infantry, followed by masses of cavalry, charged against their left, to attack the eminence by the valley. King Joseph and Marshal Jourdan took part with the reserve, in the rear of the 4th division. The artillery and musketry were not long in being heard.

“ The English Commander, stationed on the hill which overlooked the field of battle, was present always where danger demanded his presence. He could survey, at a glance, every corps of his army, and perceive below him the least movement of the French. He saw the line of battle formed, the columns disposed for the conflict ; he penetrated their designs by their arrangements, and thus had time to order his plans, so as to penetrate and prevent those of his foes. The position of the English army was naturally strong and difficult of approach, both in front and flank ; but in the rear it was quite accessible, and gave ample freedom to their troops to hasten to the quarter threatened.

“ The French had a ravine to pass before they could reach the enemy. They had to advance over ground much intersected, very rugged and unequal, obliging them frequently to break their line ; and the positions

## 116      The Story of Wellington

they attacked had been previously fortified. The left could not see the right, or know what was passing there, for the rising ground between them. Every corps of the army fought apart, with unparalleled bravery, and ability too, but there was no co-operation in their efforts. The French were not then commanded by a General-in-chief, the resources of whose genius might have compensated for the advantages which the nature of the ground denied them and yielded to their enemies.

“The division of Lapisse first passed the ravine, attacked the fortified eminence, ascended it in defiance of a fire of grape-shot which mowed down its ranks, but was repulsed with the loss of its General and a great number of officers and soldiers. In retreating, it left the right of the fourth corps uncovered, which the British artillery took in flank, and forced for a moment to retire. The left of General Sebastiani’s corps advanced under a most intense fire of artillery to the foot of a redoubt on the right of the English, and between the combined armies. It was too far advanced, and too soon forward—it was encountered and driven back by the united corps of the English right and the Spanish left. Assistance came, and the combat was renewed. In the centre, Marshal Victor rallied the division of Lapisse at the foot of the hill, and abandoned all further attempt to gain possession of it. The French then tried to turn it either by the right or left. Villatte’s division advanced in the valley, and Ruffin’s moved to the right of this by the foot of the Castilian mountains. The cavalry, forming a second line, were in readiness to debouch into the plain in the rear of the enemy whenever the infantry could open a passage.

“Just as the French began to move, the English, with two regiments of cavalry, made a charge against their masses. They engaged in the valley, passed onwards regardless of the fire of several battalions of infantry, between the divisions of Villatte and Ruffin, and fell with impetuosity never surpassed on the 10th and 26th

regiments of our chasseurs. The 10th could not resist the charge. They opened their ranks, but rallied immediately, and nearly the whole of the 23rd regiment of light dragoons at the head of the English cavalry was either destroyed or taken captive.

“A division of the English Royal Guards, stationed on the left and centre of their army, being charged by the French, at first repulsed them vigorously; but one of its brigades, being too far advanced, was in its turn taken in flank by the fire of the French artillery and infantry, sustained considerable loss, and retreated with difficulty behind their second line. The French took advantage of this success; they again moved forward, and but one other effort was necessary to break through into the plain, and combat on equal ground. But King Joseph thought it was too late to advance with the reserve, and the attack was delayed till the following day.<sup>1</sup> Night again closed over us, and the conflict ceased from exhaustion, without either side having won such a decided advantage as to entitle it to claim the victory.

“The corps of Marshals Victor and Sebastiani withdrew successively during the night towards the reserve, leaving an advanced guard of cavalry on the scene of the engagement, to take care of the wounded. The English, who expected a new attack in the morning, were greatly surprised when day dawned to see that their enemies, leaving twenty pieces of cannon, had retreated to their old position on the Alberche. The English and Spaniards, according to their own accounts, lost 6,616 men.<sup>2</sup> The French had nearly 10,000 slain.”

Wellesley characterizes the battle as “a most desperate one . . . we had about two to one against us; fearful

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon made a similar error of judgment at Waterloo by keeping the Imperial Guard in reserve until after 7 p.m. (See *post*, p. 222).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 165, says 6268; Professor Oman (“Cambridge Modern History,” vol. ix. p. 452) gives 5300, the Spanish casualties “trifling.” The latter authority states that 7200 Frenchmen were killed or wounded.

## 118      The Story of Wellington

odds ! but we maintained all our positions, and gave the enemy a terrible beating." Very few of the Spanish troops were engaged in any real sense, although those who took an active part behaved well, and one of the cavalry regiments "made an excellent and well-timed charge." The majority of them were in a "miserable state of discipline" and "entirely incapable of performing any manœuvre, however simple." There was a sad lack of *morale*, qualified officers were few, and seemed either unable or unwilling to follow their allies in the matter of subjecting their men to definite regulations. When the British soldiers were engaged in removing the wounded and in burying the dead after Talavera, "the arms and accoutrements of both were collected and carried away by the Spanish troops."

The exhausted condition of his army prevented Wellesley from following the enemy, but as Venegas was on the move and threatening Madrid, this was not regarded as of consummate importance. Of more immediate concern was the alarming intelligence received by the Commander-in-Chief a few hours later that Soult's army was no longer in Galicia, but marching to intercept the British communications with Portugal.



## CHAPTER XI

# Wellesley's Defence of Portugal

(1809-10)

*"If I fail, God will, I hope, have mercy upon me, for nobody else will."*

WELLESLEY.

SOULT, joined by Mortier and Ney, had some 50,000 men with which to face the victor of Talavera. Had Cuesta guarded the mountain passes as he was supposed to do, Wellesley would not have found himself in so awkward a predicament. Both his front and rear were threatened, the former by Victor and Sebastiani and the latter by Soult. While his ranks were sadly depleted, those of the French were augmented. By great good fortune General Craufurd and his celebrated Light Division arrived on the morning of the 29th July, the day following the conclusion of the battle.

Rumour proved on this occasion a powerful ally of the Commander-in-Chief, for had not Craufurd heard of the supposed death of Sir Arthur, it is scarcely likely that he would have urged his men, each loaded with forty pounds weight on his back, to march forty-three English miles in twenty-two hours. Wellesley made up his mind to advance against Soult, but was forced to abandon the idea when he heard that the enemy had entered Plasencia in great force, thereby severing the British communications with Lisbon. A retreat "to take up the defensive line of the Tagus" became eminently necessary. "We were in a bad scrape," he writes on the 8th August,

## 120      The Story of Wellington

“from which I think I have extricated both armies; and I really believe that, if I had not determined to retire at the moment I did, all retreat would have been cut off for both.” “Both,” of course, includes the Spaniards, whose “train of mismanagement,” added to Soult’s advance, were contributing causes of his withdrawal.

The Spaniards promised to remain at Talavera to watch the movements of the enemy and to assist the wounded. No sooner was Wellesley out of the way than Cuesta felt that the position was untenable, with the result that many British soldiers, rendered unable to keep up with the Spanish troops by reason of their wounds, were made prisoners by Victor, who soon afterwards took possession of the town.

The Tagus was crossed at Arzobispo, and a rear-guard of 8000 Spaniards, under Cuesta, left to defend the passage. At Almaraz the bridge of boats was broken to arrest Soult’s advance from Naval Moral, no great distance away, and on the high road. As it happened, the French Marshal was able to cross the river at Arzobispo by means of a ford. He promptly defeated the Spanish force there and captured their guns. Not a few of the defenders fled, throwing away their arms and clothing, a very usual device. This was followed by the defeat of Venegas by Joseph and Sebastiani at Almonacid, near Toledo, where several thousand men were either killed, wounded, or captured, and of a Portuguese and Spanish column which had been detached from the main army, under Sir Robert Wilson, by Ney at the Puerto de Baños.

In the middle of August 1809 the various armies were occupying the following positions: British, Jaraicejo; Eguia, Deleytosa; Vanegas, La Carolina; Ney, Salamanca; Kellermann, Valladolid; Soult, Plasencia; Mortier, Oropesa and Arzobispo; Victor, Talavera and Toledo; Sebastiani, La Mancha.

The storm was followed by a lull, for the contesting armies were all but worn out and required rest. Wellesley

## Wellesley's Defence of Portugal 121

made his headquarters first at Deleytosa, and, when that place was vacated on the 11th, at Jaraicejo; the Spanish made the former town their headquarters, and the Portuguese army, under Beresford, withdrew within their home frontier.

"While the army remained in this position," namely, Deleytosa, General Sir George T. Napier records: "We suffered dreadfully from want of food; nothing but a small portion of unground wheat and (when we could *catch* them) about a quarter of a pound of old goats' flesh each man; no salt, bread, or wine; and as the Spaniards had plundered the baggage of the British army during the battle of Talavera, there was nothing of any kind to be procured to help us out, such as tea or sugar."<sup>1</sup> These defects the General determined to remedy, for "no troops can serve to any good purpose unless they are regularly fed," a maxim equivalent to that of Napoleon that "an army moves on its stomach."

Cuesta resigned his command, which was given to Eguia, but from henceforth the British Commander placed his sole reliance on his own forces. The lack of co-operation in the combined army was also evident in that of the French, for the various marshals had separated, and, to Napoleon's disgust, lost a golden opportunity of crushing the hated English, which was never again vouchsafed to them. "Force Wellesley to fight on every possible occasion," was his frequent cry. "Win if you can, but lose a battle rather than deliver none. We can afford to expend three men for every one he loses, and you will thus wear him out in the end." Wellesley preferred to conserve his energy, not to squander it.

After repeated requests for provisions and means of transport, all more or less evasively answered by the Spanish authorities, Wellesley carried out his threat and fell back upon the frontiers of Portugal. Not without a certain suggestion of irony, he was at this time appointed

<sup>1</sup> "Passages in the Early Military Life of General Sir George T. Napier, K.C.B." (London, 1884), pp. 111-12.

## 122      The Story of Wellington

a Captain-General in the Spanish service, and received six Andalusian horses "in the name of King Ferdinand the VIIth." Shortly afterwards he was notified that he had been elevated to the Peerage, with the titles of Baron Douro of Wellesley, and Viscount Wellington of Talavera. From henceforth we shall style him Wellington, a signature he first adopted on the 16th September 1809.

"Nothing," he writes from Merida, on the 25th August, to Castlereagh, "can be worse than the officers of the Spanish army; and it is extraordinary that when a nation has devoted itself to war, as this nation has, by the measures it has adopted in the last two years, so little progress has been made in any one branch of the military profession by any individual, and that the business of an army should be so little understood. They are really children in the art of war, and I cannot say that they do any thing as it ought to be done, with the exception of running away and assembling again in a state of nature." In his opinion the Portuguese, under English officers, were better than the Spaniards, but both "want the habits and spirit of soldiers—the habits of command on one side, and of obedience on the other—mutual confidence between officers and men; and, above all, a determination in the superiors to obey the spirit of the orders they receive, let what will be the consequence, and the spirit to tell the true cause if they do not. In short, the fact is, there is so much trick in the Portuguese army. . . ."

At the beginning of September he was at Badajoz, on the frontier, the advantage being, as Wellington says, "that the British army was centrally posted, in reference to all the objects which the enemy might have in view; and at any time, by a junction with a Spanish corps on its right, or a Portuguese or Spanish corps on its left, it could prevent the enemy from undertaking any thing, excepting with a much larger force than they could allot to any one object." Here he heard that



## Wellesley's Defence of Portugal 123

there was a likelihood of Soult attacking Ciudad Rodrigo. This information he obtained from an intercepted letter to Joseph. "The success of this scheme," he avers, "would do them more good, and the allies more mischief, than any other they could attempt ; and it is most likely of all others to be successful." For this reason he ordered Wilson to stay north of the Tagus so as to watch Soult's movements.

In the middle of the month the Spanish army of Estremadura, stationed at Deleytosa, was reduced to 6000 soldiers, the remainder, with Eguia, marching towards La Mancha. About the same time an army of some 13,000 men, under La Romana, whom Wellington describes as "more intelligent and reasonable" than most of his countrymen, moved from Galicia to the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo. La Romana himself proceeded to Seville and was succeeded by the Duque del Parque, who marched towards Salamanca.

Wellington watched del Parque's forward movements with dismay, and ordered magazines to be prepared upon the Douro and Mondego "to assist in providing for these vagabonds if they should retire into Portugal, which I hope they will do, as their only chance of salvation."

On the 10th October Wellington was at Lisbon to arrange future operations, and where he studied "on the ground" the possibility of defending Portugal. This reconnaissance resulted in the defence known as the "Lines of Torres Vedras," of which particulars will be given as the story proceeds.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the month he was back at Badajoz, writing endless dispatches relative to the thousand and one concerns—military, political and financial—of the two armies. By the beginning of November del Parque was obliged to retire owing to the arrival from Estremadura of some 36,000 men under Mortier in Old Castile. Eguia's entry into La Mancha from Estremadura two months before had been followed by the

<sup>1</sup> See *post*, p. 130.

## 124      The Story of Wellington

arrival of 30,000 of the enemy's troops under Victor in that province, whereupon the Spanish commander had withdrawn to the Sierra Morena, and the French to the Tagus.

The Spanish Government now entertained the hope of gaining the complete possession of Madrid. Two forces were to be honoured with the carrying out of this ambitious project. The army of La Mancha, now under the inexperienced General Areizaga, joined by the greater part of the army of Estremadura, and consisting of 50,000 men, was to march from the Sierra Morena. Del Parque, with the army of Galicia, 20,000 strong, was to take Salamanca and then present himself before the capital. Areizaga met with some temporary success, but on the 19th November some 4000 of his men were either lying dead or wounded on the bloody field of Ocaña, within easy distance of Madrid. No fewer than 18,000 were taken prisoners by King Joseph's troops. When the distressed General gathered together the fragments of his shattered army in the Sierra Morena, only a half of the original number were present, which means that 3000 had deserted. He must have been sadly deficient in cannon, for the French had captured over fifty pieces.

Del Parque was scarcely more successful. He was attacked at Tamames on the 19th October by troops under Marchand, whom he defeated. Thus encouraged, he advanced to Salamanca, which the French had occupied, and taken possession of. In the last week of November he was beaten at Alba de Tormes, to which he had retreated, with a loss of 3000 men. Some of his troops retired on Galicia, the remainder on Ciudad Rodrigo.<sup>1</sup>

With the object of giving the Spanish Government time to repair their losses in southern Spain, and surmising that whatever reinforcements the French might receive would be for use against the British now that the armies

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix. p. 455. This authority gives the date of the battle of Tamames as the 18th October, but Wellington states that it occurred on the 19th.—See "Dispatches," vol. v. pp. 261 and 350.

## Wellesley's Defence of Portugal 125

under Blake, Areizaga, and del Parque were scattered, Wellington prepared to move the greater part of his army north of the Tagus, towards the frontiers of Castile, but leaving a body of troops under Lieutenant-General Hill at Abrantes, so that the Lower Tagus might not be left unguarded. Early in January 1810, Wellington made his headquarters at Coimbra, on the Mondego, and within comparatively easy distance of the sea, conceivably a useful ally now that Napoleon was sending additional reinforcements, and Soult had 70,000 men at his disposal.

The passes of Despeña Perros, and Puerto del Rey through the Sierra Morena, but weakly defended by Spanish troops under Areizaga, were forced by the French without difficulty. On the last day of January 1810, Seville capitulated. That Wellington anticipated this is proved by a letter he wrote on that date to Lord Liverpool. Cadiz was saved from a similar fate by the Duke of Albuquerque, who reached the city in the nick of time, although Victor's outposts had been seen on the banks of the Guadalquivir. Major-General the Hon. W. Stewart was sent to assist in the defence of the place, and arrived towards the end of February with some 5000 British and Portuguese troops, while a British fleet lay in the Bay.

Meanwhile Wellington was able to report considerable progress in some of the regiments in the Portuguese army, thanks very largely to the exertions of Marshal Beresford. Fifteen regiments he had seen while marching from Badajoz to Coimbra showed decided improvement in discipline, and he had "no doubt that the whole will prove an useful acquisition to the country." They were "in general unhealthy." The conduct of his own troops was "infamous" when not under the inspection of officers. "They have never brought up a convoy of money that they have not robbed the chest; nor of shoes, or any other article that could be of use to them, or could produce money, that they do not steal something."



## 126      The Story of Wellington

The failure of the Walcheren Expedition <sup>1</sup> not only led to a duel between Canning and Castlereagh and the fall of Portland's administration, but caused the British public to lose faith in things military. It seemed not at all improbable that the new Ministry formed by Perceval, in which Lord Wellesley became Foreign Secretary, and Lord Liverpool Secretary for War and the Colonies, would withdraw the British army from the Peninsula, especially as Talavera had aroused little or no enthusiasm, and a retreat was regarded by the man in the street as scarcely better than a defeat. In this connexion it is interesting to note that when Wellington was asked what was the best test of a great general, he gave as his answer, "To know when to retreat ; and to dare to do it." Aware of the state of public opinion, he did not press for further reinforcements.

In a letter to the Rt. Hon. John Villiers, dated Viseu, 14th January 1810, the Commander-in-Chief definitely states "that in its present state" the army was "not sufficient for the defence of Portugal." He anticipated having 30,000 effective British troops when the soldiers then on their way from England and those in hospital were available : "I will fight a good battle for the possession of Portugal, and see whether that country cannot be saved from the general wreck."

"I conceive," he concludes, "that the honor and interests of the country require that we should hold our ground here as long as possible ; and, please God, I will maintain it as long as I can ; and I will neither endeavor to shift from my own shoulders on those of the Ministers the responsibility for the failure, by calling for means which I know they cannot give, and which, perhaps, would not add materially to the facility of attaining our object ; nor will I give to the Ministers, who are not strong, and who must feel the delicacy of their own situation, an excuse for withdrawing the army from a position which, in my opinion, the honor and interest

<sup>1</sup> Its object was to destroy the ships and dockyards at Antwerp.



## Wellesley's Defence of Portugal 127

of the country require they should maintain as long as possible.

“ I think that if the Portuguese do their duty, I shall have enough to maintain it ; if they do not, nothing that Great Britain can afford can save the country ; and if from that cause I fail in saving it, and am obliged to go, I shall be able to carry away the British army.”

The war in Spain still continued see-saw fashion. A province would be apparently conquered by Napoleon's troops when no sooner did the troops march on than the trouble began again. This happened more especially with Suchet in Aragon. In Catalonia the intrepid O'Donnell and his men flitted about like a will-o'-the-wisp and worked sad havoc whenever they came across a detached force, though Hostalrich fell and Lerida surrendered in May, as well as the castle of Mequinenza a little later.

Napoleon had not been sleeping. In the previous year he had been too occupied in humbling Austria and annexing Rome and the Ecclesiastical States to give much attention to the Peninsula. He now placed Marshal Masséna, Prince of Essling, who by reason of his success was known as “ the spoilt child of victory ”— incidentally he was the son of an inn-keeper—in command of 180,000 troops, for which purpose he arrived at Valladolid in the middle of May 1810. Within a month the French forces in Spain were raised to no fewer than 366,000 men of all ranks and arms.

Surely “ the heir of Charlemagne,” as Napoleon termed himself, was on the point of crushing the resistance of the Iberian Peninsula, and with it insignificant Portugal and Wellington ? Was it feasible that 60,000 British, Germans, and Portuguese, sometimes aided but more often hindered by an “ insurgent ” rabble, and indirectly by the two remaining Spanish armies in Galicia and Estremadura, could contest with any likelihood of success more than a third of a million of trained troops ? The law of probability answered in the negative.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Lines of Torres Vedras

(1810)

*“ France is not an enemy whom I despise, nor does it deserve I should.”*

WELLINGTON.

PASQUIER, who had the privilege of knowing most of the generals of the Revolution and of the Empire, says of Masséna that he was “ France’s first military commander after Napoleon.” Neither Pichegru, Moreau, Kléber, nor Lannes gave the Chancellor “ as completely as Masséna, the idea of a born warrior, possessing a genius for war, and endowed with all the qualities which render victory certain. His eagle eye seemed made to scan a field of battle. One could understand, on seeing him, that the soldier under his command never believed it was possible to retreat.”

Masséna’s first important operation in the Peninsula was the siege of the Spanish fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo. Although Wellington was in the neighbourhood he was not to be enticed away from his immediate objects, which were the defence of Lisbon and the thorough organization of the army for service when action became absolutely imperative. Notwithstanding a splendid defence for over two months on the part of Governor Herrasti, the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo was compelled to surrender on the 10th July. In August, Masséna crossed the frontier preparatory to beginning the siege of



"You are too young, sir, to be killed!"

Thomas Maybank

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## The Lines of Torres Vedras 129

Almeida, near the river Coa, next to Elvas the strongest place in Portugal.

On the 24th July, Craufurd and his famous Light Division—not Light Brigade as some would have it—had a fierce tussle with Ney's corps of 24,000 men. Craufurd, who had only 4000 troops at his disposal, entertained no wild notion of preventing the investment of the place, but as he was suddenly attacked he was obliged to fight. Had he been a more cautious soldier he would have crossed the Coa before Ney came up, as Wellington had suggested on the 22nd. Indeed, so early as the 11th, the Commander-in-Chief had said, "I would not wish you to fall back beyond that place (*i.e.* Almeida), unless it should be necessary. But it does not appear necessary that you should be so far, and it will be safer that you should be nearer, at least with your infantry." He delayed too late, and thereby lost over 300 men. While the last of the soldiers were crossing the bridge which spanned the swollen river, for it had rained in torrents the previous night, a lanky Irish lad of nineteen years, named Stewart, and known by the 43rd as "The Boy," positively refused to pass over. "So this is the end of our boasting! This is our first battle, and we retreat! The Boy Stewart will not live to hear that said," he cried, and turning back he slashed at the oncoming French until he fell dead. Even more courageous was the conduct of Sergeant Robert M'Quade, five years Stewart's senior. He happened to catch sight of two French soldiers with levelled muskets awaiting the British to ascend a bank. A boy of sixteen, afterwards famous as Sir George Brown (Colonel-in-Chief of the Rifle Brigade) was on the verge of being shot by them when the sergeant pulled him back from the fatal spot. "You are too young, sir, to be killed," he cried as his own body received two bullets and fell in a lifeless heap at the feet of the youth.

That Colonel Cox, who was in charge of the fortress, would have stayed Masséna's advance for a considerable

## 130      The Story of Wellington

time is extremely likely, but unfortunately he was not given the opportunity to display his prowess. The powder-magazine blew up, almost destroying the town and necessitating immediate surrender. The pursuit of Wellington, "to drive him into the sea," seemed a comparatively easy task until the advance showed that the British General had caused the country to be stripped almost entirely of provisions. Thus Napoleon's policy of making "war support war" by plundering and raiding the enemy's country, completely broke down. "In war all that is useful is legitimate," he says, and Wellington had followed the maxim, after having obtained permission for the destruction of provisions from the Portuguese Regency, which included Mr Charles Stuart, the British Minister at Lisbon. What Wellington's measures meant to Masséna's army is summed up in a single sentence by Sir Harry Smith, who carried a dispatch to Lord Hill through territory occupied by the enemy. "The spectacle," he says, "of hundreds of miserable wretches of French soldiers on the road in a state of *starvation* is not to be described." Nor was this all. Not only did the place resemble a desert in the difficulty of obtaining means of sustenance, but the majority of the inhabitants had fled, some seeking the fastnesses of the mountains, others the larger cities such as Lisbon and Oporto.

As Masséna advanced so Wellington retreated towards the celebrated lines of Torres Vedras, upon the construction of which thousands of peasants, under the direction of British engineers, had been busy for six months.

These magnificent defences are thus described by one who knew them.<sup>1</sup> They "consisted of redoubts and field-works of various kinds; according to the ground they were to defend, and all connected with each other by entrenchments, etc., so that, when occupied by the army, it would almost be impossible to force them. But, even supposing this first line of defence should be

<sup>1</sup> General Sir George T. Napier, pp. 120-21.

## The Lines of Torres Vedras 131

carried by the enemy, there was another, much more contracted, to retreat upon, where a very small force could hold out against the French army and cover the embarkation of the British, should Lord Wellington be at last forced to quit Portugal. I cannot help considering this retreat to the lines, and the pertinacity with which he held them in spite of every difficulty, and the remonstrances of the Government at home, which was seized with alarm, as the greatest proof of a master mind and genius that could be given, and proved Lord Wellington to be superior to any general the French had, except Napoleon; in short, that he was, next to Buonaparte himself, the first general of the day. And I am further convinced that, had he the same opportunities that Napoleon had, he would have proved as great a general, as his capacity and powers of mind would have strengthened and expanded in proportion to the vastness of his views and the obstacles to be surmounted."

An officer of the 60th Rifles, who served behind them, furnishes a more detailed pen-sketch. "The line of defence was double," he writes. "The first, which was twenty-nine miles long, began at Alhandra, on the Tagus, crossed the valley of Armia, which was rather a weak point, and passed along the skirts of Mount Agraça, where there was a large and strong redoubt; it then passed across the valley of Zibreira, and skirted the ravine of Runa to the heights of Torres Vedras, which were well fortified; and from thence followed the course of the little river Zizandre to its mouth on the sea-coast. The line followed the sinuosities of the mountain track which extends from the Tagus to the sea, about thirty miles north of Lisbon. Lord Wellington's headquarters were fixed at Pero Negro, a little in the rear of the centre of the line, where a telegraph was fixed corresponding with every part of the position. The second line, at a distance varying from six to ten miles in the rear of the first, extended from Quintella, on the Tagus, by Bucellas, Montechique, and Mafra, to the mouth of the little



## 132      The Story of Wellington

river S. Lourenço, on the sea-coast, and was twenty-four miles long. This was the stronger line of the two, both by Nature and art, and if the first line were forced by the enemy, the retreat of the army upon the second was secure at all times. Both lines were secured by breast-works, abattis, stone walls with banquettes, and scarps. In the rear of the second line there was a line of embarkation, should that measure become necessary, enclosing an entrenched camp and the fort of St Julian." As many as 120 redoubts and 427 pieces of artillery were scattered along these lines. "Lord Wellington had received reinforcements from England and Cadiz; the Portuguese army had also been strengthened, and the Spanish division of La Romana, 5000 strong, came from Estremadura to join the Allies;<sup>1</sup> so that the British commander had about 60,000 regular troops posted along the first and second lines, besides the Portuguese militia and artillery (which manned the forts and redoubts and garrisoned Lisbon), a fine body of English marines which occupied a line of embarkation, a powerful fleet in the Tagus, and a flotilla of gun-boats flanking the right of the British line. It was altogether a stupendous line of defence, conceived by the military genius of the British commander, and executed by the military skill of the British engineer officers."

Wellington continued to fall back until he reached "Busaco's iron ridge," north of the Mondego. Here he determined to offer Masséna battle, for three principal reasons. First, there was a growing discontent amongst the rank and file of his army by reason of lack of active warfare and the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, and a victory would put an end to this growing despondency. Second, also a military consideration, the orders he had given for the laying waste of the districts about Lisbon were not yet fully carried out. Third, from a political point of view it was necessary because

<sup>1</sup> Really his two reserve divisions, consisting of some 8000 men. See Oman, vol. iii. p. 432, and *post*, p. 139.



## The Lines of Torres Vedras 133

it would show that he was not about to lock himself up within the lines of Torres Vedras because he was incapable or afraid of Napoleon's legions. In a word, it would "restore confidence," a matter of first importance. It is quite incorrect to term Busaco a "useless battle" as some historians have done.

"On the 25th and 26th,"<sup>1</sup> says M. de Rocca, "the French corps arrived successively at the foot of the mountains Sierra de Busaco, whose summits they found occupied by the Anglo-Portuguese army. At six o'clock, on the morning of the 27th, they marched in column against the right and centre of that army, in the two roads leading to Coimbra, by the village of San Antonio de Cantaro, and by the convent of Busaco. These roads were cut up in several places, and defended by artillery. The mountain over which they pass is besides encumbered with steep rocks, and is very difficult of access.

"The French column which attacked the right of the English advanced with intrepidity, in spite of the fire of their artillery and light troops. It reached the top of the eminence after sustaining considerable loss, and began to deploy in line with the greatest coolness, and most perfect regularity. But a superior force again assaulted it, and compelled it to retire. It soon rallied, made a second attack, and was again repulsed. The French battalions, which advanced against the convent of Busaco, where the left and centre of the English divisions joined, were also driven back, a little before they reached that post. General Simon, who had been struck by two balls during the charge, was left on the height, and a great many wounded officers and soldiers.

"The position occupied by the English and Portuguese on the brow of the hill, formed the arc of a circle, whose two extremes embraced the ground over which the French had to advance. The allied army saw the least movements made below them, and had time to form to receive any powerful body before it arrived. This cir-

<sup>1</sup> September 1810.

## 134      The Story of Wellington

cumstance materially contributed to the advantage they obtained. . . .

“ Marshal Masséna judged that the position of Lord Wellington could not be carried in front, and resolved to turn it. He kept up an irregular fire till the evening, and sent off a body of troops by the mountain-road, which leads from Mortago to Oporto. The English and Portuguese, in consequence of this movement, abandoned their position on the mountain of Busaco.”

The attack on the British left was led by Ney, and it succeeded in driving in the sharp-shooters. The French had practically reached the summit, as Rocca states, when Craufurd's division, concealed in a hollow, gave them the full benefit of their fire. “ The enemy,” says Sir Charles Stewart, who fought on this memorable day, “ unable to retreat, and afraid to resist, were rolled down the steep like a torrent of hailstones driven before a powerful wind ; and not the bayonets only, but the very hands of some of our brave fellows, became in an instant red with the blood of the fugitives. More brilliant or more decisive charges than those executed this day by the two divisions which bore the brunt of the action, were never perhaps witnessed ; nor could anything equal the gallantry and intrepidity of our men throughout, except perhaps the hardihood which had ventured upon so desperate an attack.”

Reynier's two divisions, 15,000 men in all, attacked Picton's 3rd division on the right. The troops of Generals Hill and Leith, moving rapidly to Picton's aid, decided their fate. “ The right of the 3rd division had been, in the first instance, borne back,” says an eye-witness, “ the 8th Portuguese had suffered most severely ; the enemy had formed, in good order, upon the ground which they had so boldly won, and were preparing to bear down to the right, and sweep our field of battle. Lord Wellington arrived on the spot at this moment, and aided the gallant efforts of Picton's regiments, the fire of whose musketry was terrible, by causing two guns to play

## The Lines of Torres Vedras 135

upon the French flank with grape. Unshaken even with this destruction, they still held their ground, till, with levelled bayonets and the shout of the charge, the 45th and 88th regiments, British, most gallantly supported by the 8th Portuguese, rushed forwards, and hurried them down the mountain side with a fearful slaughter."

"This movement," writes Wellington, "has afforded me a favorable opportunity of showing the enemy the description of troops of which this army is composed; it has brought the Portuguese levies into action with the enemy for the first time in an advantageous situation; and they have proved that the trouble which has been taken with them has not been thrown away, and that they are worthy of contending in the same ranks with British troops in this interesting cause, which they afford the best hopes of saving.

"Throughout the contest on the Serra, and in all the previous marches, and those which we have since made, the whole army have conducted themselves in the most regular manner. Accordingly all the operations have been carried on with ease; the soldiers have suffered no privations, have undergone no unnecessary fatigue, there has been no loss of stores, and the army is in the highest spirits."

The total British and Portuguese losses, according to the official figures, were 197 killed, 1014 wounded, and 58 missing. Masséna reported casualties to the number of 4486 men, including five generals. Anything but a kindly feeling existed between the French Commander-in-Chief and Ney previous to the battle; the result merely deepened their unfriendliness, a pitiful contrast to the cordial relations of Wellington and his colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the 27th September 1910, the centenary of the battle, an anniversary banquet was given at Busaco, which was attended by Wellington's grandson. King Manoel — now dethroned — signed a decree reaffirming the duke's Portuguese titles of Duke of Vittoria, Marquis of Torres Vedras, and Count of Vimiero. Celebrations were also held on the site of the battle.

## 136      The Story of Wellington

It is both delightful and pathetic to know that, after the last roll of the guns had echoed through the valley, the British and the French put aside their weapons and worked side by side in the humanitarian task of searching for the wounded. It was the final scene of the tragedy, acted after the curtain had fallen. It is recorded, as one of the incidents, that a German officer serving with Napoleon's colours, who had a brother in the British 60th Regiment, asked a sworn enemy of an hour ago if he knew what had happened to his relative? He answered his own pathetic question by finding the soldier's corpse.

*Books may tell of its story,  
But only the heart can know  
How war is robbed of its glory,  
By the brave ones lying low,*



## CHAPTER XIII

### Masséna beats a Retreat

(1810-11)

*“There will be a breeze near Lisbon, but I hope we shall have the best of it.”*

WELLINGTON.

**O**WING to the failure of one of Wellington's officers to occupy the Boialva Pass, Masséna was able to turn the British position, with the result that his advanced guard appeared in front of Coimbra on the evening of the 30th September.

When the Commander-in-Chief saw the French army defiling across the mountains “he seemed uneasy,” according to one who watched him, “his countenance bore a fierce, angry expression, and, suddenly mounting his horse, he rode away without speaking.”

No attempt was made to attack the enemy, Wellington considering it more prudent to leave the ridge, cross the Mondego, and retreat towards Lisbon. This resolution was come to on the 28th September, and on the 1st October the last man of the rear-guard had evacuated the town. “Although I could not save Coimbra,” Wellington writes, “I have very little doubt of being able to hold this country against the force which has now attacked it.”

The place was immediately occupied by Masséna's famished troops, who found it not entirely destitute of eatables, as seemed only too probable judging by previous

## 138      The Story of Wellington

experience, although much of the food had been destroyed by Wellington's orders. They had merely to help themselves to what they could find, for most of the population had followed in the wake of the allied army. "The inhabitants of the country have fled from their houses universally," the Commander-in-Chief writes to the Earl of Liverpool from Alcobaça on the 5th October, "carrying with them every thing they could take away which could be deemed useful to the enemy ; and the habits of plunder which have been so long encouraged in the enemy's army prevent them from deriving any general advantage from the little resource which the inhabitants may have been obliged to leave behind them."

It is the straightforward utterance of a straightforward man. Wellington seldom indulged in picturesque language ; he had neither the natural ability which commands a delicate choice of language nor the time for vivid diction. His mind was cast in a sterner mould ; he craved for exactness, for cold, matter-of-fact calculations, for ungarnished essentials.

For graphic details we must turn to such an authority as Sir Charles Stewart, who writes with the fluency of a gifted war-correspondent permitted to ride with the officers and obtain a view of everything of importance. "Crowds of men, women, and children," he says, "—of the sick, the aged, and the infirm, as well as of the robust and the young—covered the roads and the fields in every direction. Mothers might be seen with infants at their breasts hurrying towards the capital, and weeping as they went ; old men, scarcely able to totter along, made way chiefly by the aid of their sons and daughters ; whilst the whole wayside soon became strewn with bedding, blankets, and other species of household furniture, which the weary fugitives were unable to carry farther. During the retreat of Sir John Moore's army numerous heartrending scenes were brought before us ; for then, as now, the people, particularly



The Retreat from Coimbra  
Thomas Maybank

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in Galicia, fled at our approach ; but they all returned sooner or later to their homes, nor ever dreamed of accumulating upon our line of march, or following our fortunes. The case was different here. Those who forsook their dwellings, forsook them under the persuasion that they should never behold them again ; and the agony which such an apprehension appeared to excite among the majority exceeds any attempt at description. . . . It could not but occur to us that, though the devastating system must inevitably bear hard upon the French, the most serious evils would, in all probability, arise out of it, both to ourselves and our allies, from the famine and general distress which it threatened to bring upon a crowd so dense, shut up within the walls of a single city. At the moment there were few amongst us who seemed not disposed to view it with reprobation ; because, whilst they condemned its apparent violation of every feeling of humanity and justice, they doubted the soundness of the policy in which it originated."

Leaving a meagre force to guard the wounded and sick at Coimbra, Masséna started off in pursuit of the enemy as soon as the most primeval of creature comforts had been satisfied. Six days after his soldiers had left the place, namely, the 11th October 1810, Wellington's men entered the lines of Torres Vedras, but so rapid had been the French advance that they began to appear on the following morning. La Romana had crossed from Estremadura with several thousand Spanish troops, thereby adding to Wellington's forces, while Portuguese militia threatened the enemy's communications.

Masséna dared not attempt to retreat for fear of incurring Napoleon's displeasure. His only hope, as he repented at leisure, was that the supplies of the defenders might fail, or that the Emperor, in response to urgent dispatches, would speedily send reinforcements both of men and of arms. The news that Coimbra, its garrison, and its invalids, had fallen into the hands of militia under Colonel Trant merely added insult to injury. As regards

## 140      The Story of Wellington

“starving out” the British and their allies, it was far more probable that their own food would run out, for while Wellington held the Tagus a constant supply of the necessaries of life was secured from incoming ships. Hunger did indeed eventually drive Masséna from Santarem, a town some thirty miles from Wellington’s lines, on which he had been forced to fall back in November. The place, perched on the summit of a height between the rivers Rio Mayor and Aviella, was admirably suited for defensive purposes, but after the surrounding country had been stripped there was nothing to do but retire. The Marshal was fortunate in finding a district which the Portuguese had not laid bare. It sounds almost incredible, but it is recorded that when Masséna succeeded in crossing the frontier his men were so famished that one of them consumed no less than seventeen pounds of native bread. The French General awaited with feverish anxiety the coming of Soult to his relief for nearly four months, but that worthy was fighting battles and besieging Badajoz, which the Spaniards surrendered on the 10th March 1811, five days after his colleague had been forced by sheer necessity to begin a retreat across the mountains towards Ciudad Rodrigo.

The author of “The Journal of an Officer,” a reliable eye-witness, thus describes the town after Masséna had left it: “I have been for some weeks in view of Santarem, and saw at last with pleasure some symptoms of the French abandoning it. The first was setting fire to one of the principal convents in the upper town, and part of the lower town; the volume of smoke was immense for three days. On the fourth morning some information to depend on reached us, and the bugle of attack roused us from our pillows. The haze of the morning clearing up, we could easily perceive the out sentinals were men of straw, and quite passive.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a better managed retreat was never executed.

<sup>1</sup> The writer is speaking literally.

Not a vestige of a dollar's worth remained. Being at the outposts with the 11th Dragoons and the 1st Royals, I entered with them, and three miserable deserters, who had hid themselves with one too ill to move, were the only enemies to be found. Such a scene of horror, misery, and desolation, scarce ever saluted the eye of man. Smoking ruins, the accumulated filth of months, horses and human beings putrefied to suffocation, nearly caused to many a vomiting. The houses had scarcely a vestige of wood—doors, windows, ceilings, roofs, burnt; and where the sick had expired, there left to decay! The number thus left were great. Every church demolished, the tombs opened for searching after hidden plate, every altar-piece universally destroyed, and the effluvia so offensive as to defy describing.

“In some gardens, the miserable heads, undecayed, stuck up like scarecrows; in some wells, a body floating.

“Down a precipice to which we were invited by prospect to look, the human and animal carcasses . . . repulsed our senses, and shudderingly vibrated the soul at the savage, horrible, diabolical acts of a French army. Greater spirits, better discipline, and more order, never attended an army than this. But to see the country, is to weep for the horrors of war. Such horrid excess I never saw before. Every town, village, or cottage destroyed. The growing nursery and the wild grove, each havocked for destruction's sake. The pot that refined the oil broken, the wine-press burnt, for burning's sake; the grape vines destroyed as noxious weeds; the furniture unburnt thrown from the windows, and with carriages, etc., made a bonfire of; the large libraries strewed over the land in remnants of paper; the noble convent in ashes, and the poor, unhappy, aged inhabitants, unable to flee, hung around as ornamenting the walls, ten or twelve in a place!”

Wellington, who had now received reinforcements, moved his headquarters to Santarem on the 6th March,



## 142      The Story of Wellington

anxious to overtake the enemy with the least possible delay. He received the usual conflicting accounts of the direction taken by them and their probable destination. Oporto was suggested, which the Commander did not believe, "but they are in such a state of distress, that it may be expected that they will try anything, however desperate. But I follow them closely; and they will find it difficult to stop anywhere, for any purpose, till they shall draw near the frontier." He detached two divisions under Beresford, hoping that he might be able to relieve Badajoz, and with five others continued to keep "close at their heels," to use his own expression. Unfortunately the place fell before it was possible for Beresford to reach it. Had the Governor held out, Wellington was of opinion that "the Peninsula would have been safe," and the relief of the south of Spain practically certain.

"Affairs" with the enemy were frequent during Wellington's pursuit, but by forcing them to evacuate the various positions they attempted to occupy, such as Pombal, Redinha, Casal Nova and Foz d'Aronce, any designs they might have had against the northern provinces were prevented, notwithstanding the fact that the country afforded "many advantageous positions to a retreating army, of which the enemy have shown that they know how to avail themselves."

In writing to the Earl of Liverpool, Wellington remarks that "their conduct throughout this retreat has been marked by a barbarity seldom equalled, and never surpassed." He tells a moving story of plunder, the burning of houses, a convent, and a bishop's palace. "This is the mode," he adds in a burst of indignation, "in which the promises have been performed, and the assurances have been fulfilled, which were held out in the proclamation of the French Commander-in-Chief, in which he told the inhabitants of Portugal that he was not come to make war upon them, but with a powerful army of 110,000 men to drive the English into the sea.



“It is to be hoped that the example of what has occurred in this country will teach the people of this and of other nations what value they ought to place on such promises and assurances ; and that there is no security for life, or for anything which makes life valuable, excepting in decided resistance to the enemy.”

The difficulties of the chase were many and oftentimes almost unsurmountable. Boats and bridge-building materials were scarce, and caused delay in crossing rivers. Shoes wore out rapidly on account of the bad quality of the leather, and many of them were too small. Endless trouble was caused by the Spanish muleteers, who absolutely refused to attend the Portuguese troops, some of whom Wellington was obliged to leave in the rear owing to the scarcity of provisions. For instance, two brigades of infantry had to make nine days' provisions, consisting chiefly of bread and a little meat supplied by the British commissariat, last for twenty-four days. “This is the assistance I receive from the Portuguese Government !” the Commander-in-Chief writes, and one can imagine his grim face hardening as he pens the words. There were the usual grievances against the rascally army contractors. The boots sent out were of bad quality, “in general too small.” We find him ordering 150,000 pairs of boots and 100,000 pairs of soles and heels at a time.

The most serious action during Masséna's retreat was fought at Sabugal, on the Coa, on the 3rd April. “We moved on the 2nd,” Wellington says when giving details of the engagement to Beresford, “and the British army was formed opposite to them ; the divisions of militia, under Trant and Wilson, were sent across the river at Cinco Villas, to alarm Almeida for its communication. Yesterday morning”—he is writing on the 4th inst.—“we moved the whole army (with the exception of the 6th division, which remained at Rapoula de Coa, opposite Loison) to the right, in order to turn this position, and force the passage of the river. The 2nd corps could not

have stood here for a moment ; but unfortunately the Light division, which formed the right of the whole, necessarily passed first, and the leading brigade, Beckwith's, drove in the enemy's piquets, which were followed briskly by four companies of the 95th, and three of Elder's caçadores, and supported by the 43rd regiment. At this time there came on a rain storm, and it was as difficult to see as in the fogs on Busaco, and these troops pushed on too far, and became engaged with the main body of the enemy. The light infantry fell back upon their support, which instead of halting, moved forward. The French then seeing how weak the body was which had passed, attempted to drive them down to the Coa, and did oblige the 43rd to turn. They rallied again, however, and beat in the French ; but were attacked by fresh troops and cavalry, and were obliged to retire ; but formed again, and beat back the enemy. At this time the 52nd joined the 43rd, and both moved on upon the enemy, and to be charged and attacked again in the same manner, and beat back. They formed again, moved forward upon the enemy, and established themselves on the top of the hill in an enclosure, and here they beat off the enemy.

“But Reynier was placing a body of infantry on their left flank, which must have destroyed them, only that at that moment the head of the 3rd division, which had passed the Coa on the left of the Light division, came up, and opened their fire upon this column ; and the 5th division, which passed this bridge and through this town [Sabugal], made their appearance.

“The enemy then retired, having lost in this affair a howitzer, and I should think not less than 1000 men.

“Our loss is much less than one would have supposed possible, scarcely 200 men. The 43rd have 73 killed and wounded. But really these attacks in columns<sup>1</sup> against our lines are very contemptible.

<sup>1</sup> The usual French mode of attack.

“The contest was latterly entirely for the howitzer, which was taken and retaken twice, and at last remained in our hands. Our cavalry, which ought to have crossed the Coa on the right of the Light division, crossed at the same ford, and therefore could be of no use to them. Besides they went too far to the right.

“In short, these combinations for engagements do not answer, unless one is upon the spot to direct every trifling movement. I was upon a hill on the left of the Coa, immediately above the town, till the 3rd and 5th divisions crossed, whence I could see every movement on both sides, and could communicate with ease with everybody; but that was not near enough.

“We took 6 Officers, and between 200 and 300 prisoners, and Soult’s<sup>1</sup> and Loison’s baggage.”

Two days after this affair on the banks of the Coa Masséna crossed the frontier, having been literally driven out of Portugal. Within a few hours we find Wellington urging on Beresford the necessity for a strict blockade of Badajoz preparatory to besieging it. Masséna fell back upon Salamanca, while Wellington busied himself with the investment of Almeida, where a French garrison had been left. With Ciudad Rodrigo, the second and remaining place occupied by the Marshal’s troops, he felt he could do little at the moment beyond intercepting supplies. These two forts, which are within comparatively easy distance and almost parallel, the one in Portugal and the other in Spain, were extremely important, and commanded the north-eastern frontier of the former country.

Incidentally, the British Commander-in-Chief also took the opportunity to publish a lengthy Proclamation to the Portuguese nation, of which the following is a brief synopsis. He informs the inhabitants that they are now “at liberty to return to their occupations,” that nearly four years have elapsed since “the tyrant of Europe” invaded the country, the object being “the

<sup>1</sup> Not Marshal Soult, but his nephew.



## 146      The Story of Wellington

insatiable desire of plunder, the wish to disturb the tranquillity, and to enjoy the riches of a people who had passed nearly half a century in peace." He then strikes a deeper note and adds a few words of advice as to the future :

"The Marshal General, however, considers it his duty, in announcing the intelligence of the result of the last invasion, to warn the people of Portugal, that, although the danger is removed, it is not entirely gone by. They have something to lose, and the tyrant will endeavor to plunder them : they are happy under the mild government of a beneficent Sovereign ; and he will endeavor to destroy their happiness : they have successfully resisted him, and he will endeavor to force them to submit to his iron yoke. They should be unremitting in their preparations for decided and steady resistance ; those capable of bearing arms should learn the use of them ; or those whose age or sex renders them unfit to bear arms should fix upon places of security and concealment, and should make all the arrangements for their easy removal to them when the moment of danger shall approach. Valuable property, which tempts the avarice of the tyrant and his followers, and is the great object of their invasion, should be carefully buried beforehand, each individual concealing his own, and thus not trusting to the weakness of others to keep a secret in which they may not be interested.

"Measures should be taken to conceal or destroy provisions which cannot be removed, and everything which can tend to facilitate the enemy's progress ; for this may be depended upon, that the enemy's troops seize upon everything, and leave nothing for the owner.

"By these measures, whatever may be the superiority of numbers with which the desire of plunder and of revenge may induce, and his power may enable, the tyrant again to invade this country, the result will be certain ; and the independence of Portugal, and the



happiness of its inhabitants, will be finally established to their eternal honor.”<sup>1</sup>

However “beneficent” the Sovereign — who was a lunatic and out of the country—might be, Wellington had little that was good to say of its present rulers. He told them that he would inform the home Cabinet “that they cannot with propriety continue to risk a British army in this country unsupported by any exertion of any description on the part of the Portuguese Government.” The army was lamentably deficient “in that essential arm, its cavalry,” and the commissariat arrangements remained hopelessly deficient.

The blockade of Almeida being “a simple operation, which I do not think the enemy have the means or inclination to interrupt,” Wellington left it in the hands of Lieut.-General Sir Brent Spencer in the middle of April, and set out from Villa Fermosa for Alemtejo to discuss his future projects with Castaños and also to visit Beresford. He knew that the French at Almeida would be forced to withdraw or surrender owing to the scarcity of provisions, but at Ciudad Rodrigo “there is a good garrison, and we certainly shall not get that place without a siege; for which God knows if we shall have time before the enemy will be reinforced. The first object is certainly Badajoz, and, as soon as I know whether any or what part of our train is required for the attack of that place, I shall send the remainder to Oporto, and make all the arrangements for the eventual attack of Ciudad Rodrigo.”

As Soult was then busily occupied in fortifying Seville, to the south of Badajoz, the siege of the latter city became imperative, and without unnecessary delay. Soult might attempt to relieve Badajoz; certainly his presence at Seville precluded the likelihood of the garrison being deceived by any feint or actual attack made on that place by the allies with the object of distracting their attention.

<sup>1</sup> The Proclamation is printed in full in Gurwood’s edition of “Wellington’s Despatches,” vol. vii. pp. 455-7.

## 148      The Story of Wellington

Although Wellington did not meet Castaños personally during his visit to the south, he sent him a plan of operations, to be undertaken with Blake and Ballasteros in co-operation with Beresford, and got through an immense amount of work in connection with the siege. "The continued and increasing inefficiency of the Portuguese regiments with this army," gave him much cause for concern. On the 30th April 1811, four days after Parliament had thanked him for the liberation of Portugal, he tells Beresford that "if some effectual steps are not taken, the Portuguese force with this part of the army (*i.e.* Wellington's) will be annihilated." He concludes by saying that he must report the matter to the home authorities, which he did. "The Ministers and the English public believe that we have 30,000 men for whom we pay, and half as many more supported by the Portuguese Government. I do not believe that I have here 11,000, or that you have 5000, and of the number many are not fit for service."

Masséna was not the type of man who easily acknowledges defeat. He had been busily engaged at Salamanca in getting what remained of his army into working order. He had lost at least 25,000 of the 70,000 men who had entered Portugal, but when he decided to go to the assistance of Almeida he could with difficulty muster only 39,000, some 5000 more than Wellington could put into the field. Having relieved Ciudad Rodrigo, Masséna crossed the Agueda, with the fixed intention of raising the blockade of Almeida. On the 3rd May he was in sight of the British army, now arrayed at Fuentes de Oñoro.

The Commander-in-Chief had returned from his travels on the 28th of the previous month, after having been informed by Spencer of the gathering of the enemy. "I'll venture to say," remarks Kincaid, "that there was not a heart in the army that did not beat more lightly when we heard the joyful news of his arrival the day before the enemy's advance." On the 3rd May the British

were “warmly but partially engaged,” and “made no progress in raising the blockade.”

The real battle began on the 5th, and was, in Alison’s opinion, “the most critical in which Lord Wellington was engaged in the whole war, and in which the chances of irreparable defeat were most against the British army.” He then gives some of Sir Charles Stewart’s reflections on the fight, which help us to appreciate its difficulties from the point of view of an actual eye-witness who took a leading part in the battle. “Masséna’s superiority to us,” he notes, “both in cavalry and artillery, was very great; whilst the thick woods in our front afforded the most convenient plateau which he could have desired for the distribution of his columns unseen, and therefore disregarded. Had he rightly availed himself of this advantage, he might have poured the mass of his force upon any single point, and perhaps made an impression before we could have had time to support it. Had he commenced his attack with a violent cannonade, it must have produced some havoc, and probably considerable confusion, in our line. He might then have moved forward his cavalry *en masse*, supporting it by strong columns of infantry; and had either the one or the other succeeded in piercing through, our situation would have been by no means an enviable one. . . . Had he thrown his cavalry round our right flank—a movement which we should have found it no easy matter to prevent—crossed the Coa, advanced upon our lines of communication, and stopped our supplies, at the moment when, with his infantry, he threatened to turn us; then pushed upon Sabugal and the places near, he might have compelled us to pass the Coa with all our artillery at the most disadvantageous places, and cut us off from our best and safest retreat. There was, indeed, a time during the affair of the 5th, when his design of acting in this manner was seriously apprehended; and Lord Wellington was in consequence reduced to the necessity of deciding whether he should relinquish the Sabugal road or raise the



blockade of Almeida. But Lord Wellington's presence of mind never for a moment forsook him. He felt no distrust in his troops ; to retain his hold over a secure and accessible line of retreat was therefore to him a consideration of less moment than to continue an operation of which the ultimate success could now be neither doubtful nor remote ; and he at once determined to expose Sabugal rather than throw open a communication with Almeida. It was a bold measure, but it was not adopted without due consideration, and it received an ample reward in the successful termination of this hard-fought battle."

Wellington's line was extended on a table-land between the rivers Turones and Dos Casas. It reached several miles, namely, from Fort Conception, which covered Almeida (opposite the village of that name he disposed his centre), to beyond Nava d'Aver, his right being at Fuentes de Oñoro. Poço Velho, between the latter place and Nava d'Aver, was also occupied by the left wing of the 7th Division, commanded by General Houstoun.

Masséna's first movement was to attack the Spanish irregulars, under Don Julian Sanchez, stationed on the hill of Nava d'Aver, which was neither a lengthy nor a difficult process.

Major-General Houstoun scarcely fared better, two of his battalions being routed. The immediate consequence was that Captain Norman Ramsay's battery of Horse Artillery, which were supporting Houstoun, were soon fighting against fearful odds. By means of a magnificent charge, while the attention of part of the French force was detracted by the dragoons under Sir Stapleton Cotton, Ramsay made good his escape with every gun.

The situation was extremely critical when the squares of the 7th and Light Divisions were attacked by the enemy's cavalry, but Wellington did not hesitate for a moment as to the best course to pursue. He abandoned Nava d'Aver and closed in his line by a complete change of front, withdrawing some of his divisions to the heights,



and Houstoun's men behind the Turones, to a position near Freneda, which became the British right and Fuentes de Oñoro the left.

"Montbrun's cavalry," we are told, "merely hovered about Craufurd's squares, the plain was soon cleared, the cavalry took post behind the centre, and the Light Division formed a reserve to the right of the 1st Division, sending the riflemen among the rocks to connect it with the 7th Division, which had arrived at Freneda, and was there joined by Julian Sanchez. At the sight of this new front, so deeply lined with troops, the French stopped short, and commenced a heavy cannonade, which did great execution, from the closeness of the allied masses; but twelve British guns replied with vigour, and the violence of the enemy's fire abated; their cavalry then drew out of range, and a body of French infantry, attempting to glide down the ravine of the Turones, was repulsed by the riflemen and light companies of the Guards."

Meanwhile a fierce conflict was taking place in the village of Fuentes. It continued see-saw fashion until the evening, both sides bringing up reserves and contesting every inch of the ground. Three regiments were driven from the lower parts of the village, but reinforcements were at hand, and the higher streets were never abandoned, although a chapel held by the troops in that quarter was evacuated. At nightfall the French crossed the river, leaving 400 of their dead in the village. Wellington averred that the battle "was the most difficult I was ever concerned in, and against the greatest odds. We had very nearly three to one against us engaged; about four to one of cavalry; and, moreover, our cavalry had not a gallop in them, while some of that of the enemy was fresh, and in excellent order. If Bony had been there we should have been beaten."

As a battle the engagement scarcely could be called a victory for the Allies, but Masséna had failed to relieve Almeida, while Wellington had succeeded in covering its

blockade. The total casualties of the British, Spanish, and Portuguese on the 3rd and 5th reached 1800, of the French nearly 3000, and 210 were taken prisoners. On the morning of the 8th May the last of the enemy left the field, but three days later the Commander-in-Chief received bad news. On the previous night the garrison of Almeida blew up part of the fortress and escaped, although the force sent by Wellington to blockade it was "four times more numerous than the garrison." He characterized it as "the most disgraceful event that has yet occurred to us." His correspondence at this period teems with references to it.

Masséna was no longer "the favoured child of victory" or Napoleon's "right arm," as the Emperor had called him, and he was recalled, to be succeeded by Marmont, an excellent artillery officer then not quite thirty-seven years of age, whereas Masséna was fifty-three and deemed "too old" by his autocratic sovereign.

Marmont speedily came to the conclusion when he took up his new post that without rest the so-called army of Portugal could not possibly expect to meet Wellington with any likelihood of success. He accordingly moved his troops to the province of Salamanca, where we will leave them for a little while to watch the course of the war elsewhere.

Beresford had now invested Badajoz, and engaged the enemy in several sorties, on one occasion suffering severe loss owing to the imprudence of his troops. Receiving news to the effect that Soult was rapidly approaching with the determined object of relieving it, he raised the siege and posted his army on the ridge of Albuera to stop the French advance. The British Commander had nearly 32,000 men at his disposal. Of these no fewer than 24,000 were foreigners, including the Spanish forces of Blake, Castaños, Ballasteros, and Don Carlos d'España, which had formed a junction with him. The enemy had 23,000 troops.

As Wellington was not present a detailed description

of the battle, which took place on the 16th May, does not come within the province of this volume. It was one of the most fiercely contested of the entire war. So much so that Beresford used up his entire reserves and lost 4100 British troops, in addition to 1400 Portuguese and Spanish killed and wounded. The French losses were over 6000, and 500 were taken prisoners. Had it not been for Colonel Hardinge, Beresford would have retreated. Following his colleague's advice he remained and was victorious. It was at Albuera that the 57th Foot (now the 1st Middlesex Regiment) won the well-deserved name of "Die Hards" from the fact that Colonel Inglis shouted to his troops, "Die hard, my men ; die hard !" <sup>1</sup> "It was observed," writes Beresford to Wellington, "that our dead, particularly the 57th regiment, were lying, as they had fought, in ranks, and that every wound was in front."

On the 19th Wellington, with two divisions, arrived at Elvas, and on the 21st he rode to Albuera and surveyed the site of the contest. "The fighting was desperate," he writes, "and the loss of the British has been very severe ; but, adverting to the nature of the contest, and the manner in which they held their ground against all the efforts the whole French army could make against them, notwithstanding all the losses which they had sustained, I think this action one of the most glorious and honourable to the character of the troops of any that has been fought during the war."

Surely a more noble tribute to the "common" soldier was never penned !

<sup>1</sup> Lady Butler's picture, "Steady, the Drums and Fifes," represents this regiment drawn up on the ridge.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo

(1811-12)

*“ The great object in all sieges is to gain time.”*

WELLINGTON.

THE exacting nature of the campaign was beginning to tell on Wellington. “ I certainly feel, every day,” he had written to the Earl of Liverpool on the 15th May 1811, “ more and more the difficulty of the situation in which I am placed. I am obliged to go everywhere, and if absent from any operation, something goes wrong.” “ Another such battle ” as Albuera, he informs his brother Henry on the 22nd, “ would ruin us,” and he proceeds to compare the Spanish and Portuguese troops, to the disadvantage of the former. They often held their ground too well, there was no moving them in a battle. On the other hand, “ We do what we please now with the Portuguese troops ; we manœuvre them under fire equally with our own, and have some dependence on them ; but these Spaniards can do nothing, but stand still, and we consider ourselves fortunate if they do not run away.” In his report of the battle Beresford mentions the Spanish cavalry as having behaved “ extremely well.”

Some idea of the enormous amount of labour involved may be gained from the fact that on the day mentioned Wellington either wrote or dictated at least eighteen



## The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo 155

dispatches, including two dealing with the loss of an officer for whose widow and child he was endeavouring to obtain "favour and protection" at the hands of the home authorities. At the same time he was actively preparing for the renewed siege of Badajoz: "The late action has made a terrible hole in our ranks; but I am working hard to set all to rights again." He appeared "destined to pass his life in the harness," to use his own phrase, and had "a monstrous quantity of business to settle of different descriptions."

Referring to the difference of opinion held by his officers regarding his policy, he says, "I believe nothing but something worse than firmness could have carried me through. . . . To this add that people in England were changing their opinions almost with the wind, and you will see that I had not much to look to excepting myself." The words are almost those of a broken-hearted man.

Badajoz was again invested on the 25th May, and the batteries opened fire on the 3rd of the following month in an attempt to breach the fort of San Christoval and the castle. Wellington had then made his headquarters at Quinta de Granicha, from whence he writes, on the 6th to the Earl of Liverpool, to the effect that if he cannot prevent the enemy from receiving provisions he will not risk an action because he has not the means, and out of fairness to his soldiers he cannot "make them endure the labours of another siege at this advanced season. Notwithstanding that we have carried on our operations with such celerity," he concludes "we have had great difficulties to contend with, and have been much delayed by the use of the old ordnance and equipments of Elvas, and of the Portuguese artillery, in this siege; some of the guns from which we fire are above 150 years old." The majority of them were supposed to be 24-pounders, but they proved to be larger, with the result that their fire was very uncertain. Two attempts were made to storm the outwork of San Christoval without success,

## 156      The Story of Wellington

many brave fellows perishing in the vain effort to escalate the walls.

Three weeks had not elapsed before it became eminently necessary to retire from this scene of activity. During this short time nearly 500 officers and men had been reported as killed, wounded, or missing, and fifty-two of the Chasseurs Britanniques had deserted. "I have a great objection to foreigners in this army," he informs a colleague a little later, "as they desert terribly; and they not only give the enemy intelligence which he would find it difficult to get in any other manner, but by their accounts and stories of the mode in which deserters from the French army are treated by us, some of them well founded, they have almost put an end to desertion." The reason for the latter belief was the legend "that the deserters from the enemy are sent to the West India Islands, and have no chance of ever returning to Europe."

Marmont, having united his scattered units, was about to join forces with Soult, which meant that when they marched on Badajoz, as undoubtedly they would do, the French army might number between 50,000 and 60,000 troops. Wellington had been of opinion that it was possible to reduce the place before the end of the second week of June. An intercepted dispatch from Soult to Marmont made it abundantly evident that the enemy were to concentrate in Estremadura, and other intelligence clearly proved that the destination of the French army was "to the southward." Elvas, where supplies were running low, had first to be replenished, so that it might be in a condition of defence should the enemy cross the frontiers. Leaving a comparatively small number of men to blockade Badajoz, and having made arrangements for the strengthening of Elvas, he marched from that place to Quinta de St João, where he remained for a considerable period. For nearly a fortnight the French threatened to attack, and had they done so it is scarcely possible that Wellington could have held his own in the field. Soult was the first to withdraw, the

## The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo 157

immediate cause being the threatening of Seville by Blake, who retired when Soult approached. Marmont, feeling unequal to fight alone, marched to the valley of the Tagus and cantoned his army between Talavera and Plasencia. During the crisis the two marshals mustered 62,000 troops, Wellington about 48,000.

The heat and other considerations prevented Wellington from besieging Badajoz; to relieve Cadiz was out of the question because the forces of Soult and Marmont would be almost certain to come to the assistance of the force before the great southern port. He therefore decided to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo, for four reasons stated in a letter to the Earl of Liverpool dated the 18th July, namely: "We can derive some assistance from our militia in the north in carrying it into execution, and the climate in which the operation is to be carried on is not unfavorable at this season. If it should not succeed, the attempt will remove the war to the strongest frontier of Portugal; and, if obliged to resume the defensive, the strength of our army will be centrically situated, while the enemy's armies of the north and of the south will be disunited." Shortly after the above dispatch was written he heard that Suchet had captured Tarragona, which made the proposed operation "less favorable." "However," he tells Beresford on the 20th of the same month, "we shall have a very fine army of little less than 60,000 men,<sup>1</sup> including artillery, in the course of about a fortnight; and I do not see what I can do with it, to improve the situation of the allies, during the period in which it is probable that, the enemy's attention being taken up with the affairs of the north of Europe,<sup>2</sup> we shall be more nearly on a par of strength with him, excepting we undertake this operation."

<sup>1</sup> He had recently received reinforcements from England.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon dominated practically the whole of Northern Europe. He was then planning a confederacy which was to consist of Sweden, Denmark, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.



## 158      The Story of Wellington

Lieutenant-General Hill was entrusted with the duty of watching the enemy in Alemtejo,<sup>1</sup> and two divisions were left in Estremadura. The Commander-in-Chief, with some 40,000 men, hastened towards Ciudad Rodrigo, unaware at the moment that the garrison had been reinforced and that Napoleon was sending more men to the Peninsula. When these important facts reached him he contented himself with blockading the place, and prepared to retire behind the Agueda should necessity warrant. Marmont sent for Dorsenne, who had taken the command in Galicia from Bessières, and with 60,000 troops set out toward the end of September to relieve Ciudad Rodrigo. Wellington then occupied El Bodon, on the left bank of the Agueda. "The object of taking a position so near to the enemy," he says, "was to force them to show their army. This was an object, because the people of the country, as usual, believed and reported that the enemy were not so strong as we knew them to be; and if they had not seen the enemy's strength, they would have entertained a very unfavorable opinion of the British army, which it was desirable to avoid. This object was accomplished by the operations at the close of September."

Early on the morning of the 25th the Marshal drove in the outposts of Wellington's left wing, and turned the heights occupied by the right centre, thereby placing the British Commander in a dangerous position, from which he extricated himself by hurling his cavalry at the horsemen and artillery now endeavouring to scale the heights. Two British guns were captured and retaken at the point of the bayonet. When the French infantry were brought into action Wellington gradually withdrew in the direction of Fuente Guinaldo, pursued by the enemy's cavalry, which were received by solid British squares and repelled as six miles were traversed. Marmont again advanced on the 26th, but did not attack. Wellington

<sup>1</sup> Wellington's instructions to Hill will be found in "Dispatches," vol. viii. pp. 180-82.



## The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo 159

retreated until he reached a strong position in front of Sabugal on the 28th.

A rear-guard action had been fought on the previous day at Aldea da Ponte, but Marmont withdrew without offering battle, and, after supplying much needed necessities to Ciudad Rodrigo, proceeded to the Tagus valley and Dorsenne to Salamanca. Wellington renewed the blockade "in order," as he says, "to keep a large force of the enemy employed to observe our operations, and to prevent them from undertaking any operation elsewhere." Placing his army in cantonments on the banks of the Coa, the Commander-in-Chief made his headquarters at Freneda.

While in their winter quarters both officers and men were able to recuperate after their previous arduous campaign. Sports, theatricals and other amusements helped to pass away the time and to cheer up the army. Even more important was the opportunity thus afforded the many semi-invalids to recover their health. "We are really almost an army of convalescents." Wellington himself rode to hounds occasionally, and applauded the amateur histrionic efforts of his soldiers, when time and circumstances permitted him to attend their performances. He was able to re-establish Almeida as a military post, where he kept his battering-train to deceive the enemy, to blockade Ciudad Rodrigo, and to prepare for its investment.

Meanwhile the guerillas were "increasing in numbers and boldness throughout the Peninsula," constantly annoying the French commanders. "It was their indomitable spirit of resistance," says Professor Oman,<sup>1</sup> "which enabled Wellington, with his small Anglo-Portuguese army, to keep the field against such largely superior numbers. No sooner had the French concentrated, and abandoned a district, than there sprang up in it a local Junta and a ragged apology for an army. Even where the invaders lay thickest, along the route

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix. p. 469.

## 160      The Story of Wellington

from Bayonne to Madrid, guerilla bands maintained themselves in the mountains, cut off couriers and escorts, and often isolated one French army from another for weeks at a time. The greater partisan chiefs, such as Mina in Navarre, Julian Sanchez in Leon, and Porlier in the Cantabrian hills, kept whole brigades of the French in constant employment. Often beaten, they were never destroyed, and always reappeared to strike some daring blow at the point where they were least expected. Half the French army was always employed in the fruitless task of guerilla-hunting. This was the secret which explains the fact that, with 300,000 men under arms, the invaders could never concentrate more than 70,000 to deal with Wellington."

In the autumn and winter of 1811 the enemy accomplished nothing of importance in eastern and southern Spain. In the south-east Suchet defeated Blake on the 25th October at the battle of Sagunto, "the last pitched battle of the war," remarks the above authority, "in which a Spanish army, unaided by British troops, attempted to face the French." Forced into the city of Valencia with part of his motley array, Blake made a gallant attempt to rid himself of his besieger, an almost impossible task considering that Suchet had been reinforced while the unfortunate Spanish commander had been considerably reduced. On the 9th January 1812 his 16,000 followers laid down their weapons

The investment of Ciudad Rodrigo by Wellington had been delayed owing to a complexity of causes. All the carting had to be performed by Portuguese and Spanish, and their slowness and the inclement weather combined precluded the Commander-in-Chief from pushing forward his operations with any celerity of movement. Empty carts took two days to go ten miles on a good road. Wellington confessed that he had to appear satisfied, otherwise the drivers would have deserted. If he succeeded in his designs he hoped to "make a fine campaign in the spring"; if he did not, "I shall bring back towards

## The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo 161

this frontier the whole [French] army which had marched towards Valencia and Aragon. By these means I hope to save Valencia."

Alas, for human ambition ! The capital of the province fell three days after the above dispatch was written.

On the 8th January 1812 a start was made, and Ciudad Rodrigo invested. During the night the palisaded redoubt on the hill of San Francisco, which the French had recently constructed, was stormed and carried, but Wellington at once perceived that the enemy had made good use of their time by strengthening their works and fortifying three convents in the suburbs. "The success of this operation," he writes, "enabled us immediately to break ground within 600 yards of the place, notwithstanding that the enemy still hold the fortified convents ; and the enemy's work has been turned into a part of our first parallel, and a good communication made with it." Wellington encamped his men on the southern bank, which necessitated their fording the narrow stream, although he had built a bridge lower down the Agueda for munitions. It was no child's play for the soldiers. Through icy cold water, across ground covered with snow and frost, and amidst a rain of shot and shell, these brave fellows went to their work, each division in succession. Some of them returned, others did not, for "The path of glory leads but to the grave."

The convent of Santa Cruz was captured on the night of the 13th, followed on the 14th by the fall of the convent of San Francisco and other fortified posts in the suburbs. By this time batteries were within 180 yards of the walls. "We proceeded at Ciudad Rodrigo," he tells the Duke of Richmond, "on quite a new principle in sieges. The whole object of our fire was to lay open the walls. We had not one mortar ; nor a howitzer, excepting to prevent the enemy from clearing the breaches, and for that purpose we had only two ; and we fired upon the flanks and defences only when we wished to get the better of them, with a view to protect those



## 162      The Story of Wellington

who were to storm. This shows the kind of place we had to attack. . . ." Matters now became urgent, for advice had been received that Marmont was stirring. By the 19th the breaches made in the ramparts by the artillery were declared practicable. Wellington had already summoned the Governor to surrender. His reply was that "he and the brave garrison which he commanded were prepared rather to bury themselves in the ruins of a place entrusted to them by their Emperor." The troops, consisting of the regiments of the 3rd and Light Divisions and some Portuguese caçadores, marched to the assault in five columns. "Rangers of Connaught," cried General Picton to the "Fighting 3rd," who were charged with the centre attack, "it is not my intention to expend any powder this evening; we'll do this business with the cold iron."

It was the task of Picton and his men to assault the great breach, while the 52nd, the 43rd, and the 95th regiments, assisted by two battalions of caçadores, assaulted the other. At the same time a brigade of Portuguese under General Pack was to make a feint at the Santiago gate, at the southern end of the town, and the light company of the 83rd regiment with another body of native soldiers were to scale the castle walls. As the columns advanced the moon, then in its first quarter, revealed their black outline to the enemy. They at once opened fire. No reply was vouchsafed by the Allies, who marched with fixed bayonets and unloaded muskets. It was not part of their plan to return a greeting made by men who were behind ramparts.

The Portuguese under Colonel O'Toole were the first to attack, closely followed by the 5th, 94th, and 77th regiments, the last supposed to act as a reserve. The Light Division, impatient of delay and not wishing to be rivalled in prowess, hurled themselves at the small breach without waiting for the bags of hay which were to be thrown in the ditch to assist them in crossing. Many of the attacking force literally passed over the shot-



## The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo 163

riddled bodies of the vanguard as they attempted to get through. Major George Napier, while leading his men, had his arm shattered, but still continued to encourage them ; Robert Craufurd, the intrepid and cantankerous commander of the Light Division, fell mortally wounded ; Major-General Maekinnon was blown up by the explosion of a magazine. Nine officers and eleven non-commissioned officers and drummers gave up their lives for their country during the siege and in the assault from the 8th to the 19th, the total loss in killed and injured being nearly 1000. The hand-to-hand fighting continued in the streets, and the town caught fire.

At dawn 1700 of the enemy surrendered, including the Governor. Marmont's battering train, scores of field guns, and a plentiful supply of ammunition fell into the hands of the victors. Wellington had "great pleasure" in reporting "the uniform good conduct, and spirit of enterprise, and patience, and perseverance in the performance of great labor" on the part of the troops who had been engaged. As for the men themselves, they got drunk and sacked the place.

Wellington's rewards for the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo were numerous. He became an Earl in Great Britain, a Duke in Spain, and a Marquis in Portugal. In addition he was granted an extra annual pension of £2000 by Parliament. Financial offers were also forthcoming from the two Peninsula Powers, but he declined them. "He had only done his duty to his country, and to his country alone he would look for his reward."

Marmont was in ignorance of the siege until the 15th January. He then began to make preparations, but when he was ready the fortress had fallen, and he moved his army to Valladolid, to the north-east. Napoleon then sent orders to the Marshal that if he could not regain Ciudad Rodrigo he was to return to Salamanca, cross the frontier, and advance on Almeida. He foresaw that perhaps Wellington might turn his attention to Badajoz, which, in the Emperor's opinion, would be a "mistake,"

## 164      The Story of Wellington

and that of necessity he would have to return to succour the Portuguese fortress: "You will soon bring him back again." The British Commander also surmised that another attack on Ciudad was quite possible. Before setting out on his next bold enterprise he therefore put the fortifications in thorough repair, and brought up a reserve supply of 50,000 rations in case it should be besieged. Satisfied that the place could now offer a bold resistance to the enemy, and having also repaired the works of Almeida, he marched the greater part of his army to the valley of the Guadiana, and invested Badajoz, which is on the left side of that river, on the 16th March 1812.

Wellington fully appreciated the immense value of time, and if he did not actually work with his eyes on the clock, he always endeavoured to fix a definite date for his operations. Thus as early as the preceding January he had written to his brother from Gallegos, a little to the north of Ciudad, that it was probable he would be in readiness to invest the place "in the second week in March." "We shall have great advantages in making the attack so early if the weather will allow of it," he tells another correspondent. "First, all the torrents in this part of the country are then full, so that we may assemble nearly our whole army on the Guadiana, without risk to anything valuable here.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it will be convenient to assemble our army at an early period in Estremadura, for the sake of the green forage, which comes in earlier to the south than here. Thirdly, we shall have advantages, in point of subsistence, over the enemy, at that season, which we should not have at a later period. Fourthly, their operations will necessarily be confined by the swelling of the rivers in that part as well as here." In order to deceive the enemy he remained behind with the 5th Division as long as possible and gave instructions for a report to be circulated to the effect that he was going to hunt on the banks of the Huelbra and Yeltes.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* The province of Leon, in which Ciudad Rodrigo is situated.

## CHAPTER XV

### Badajoz and Salamanca

(1812)

*"I shall not give the thing up without good cause."*

WELLINGTON.

CONSIDERABLE energy was displayed by the troops in the siege operations at Badajoz, notwithstanding the persistent torrents of rain which soaked the men to the skin and filled the trenches as they worked. A bridge of pontoons was carried away and the flying bridges irretrievably injured by the swollen state of the Guadiana. The place was by no means an easy one to take, for strong outworks defended it, and Philippon, the French Governor, was a most able officer in whom his troops placed every confidence. However, good fortune did not attend the first sortie made by about 2000 of the enemy on the 19th March. They were "almost immediately driven in, without effecting any object, with considerable loss, by Major-General Bowes, who commanded the guard in the trenches," to quote from Wellington's official dispatch.

On the 25th an attack was made on fort Picurina, an advanced post separated from Badajoz by the little river called the Rivillas. Twenty-eight guns in six batteries were brought to bear upon it, and after dark the place was carried by storm, although it was protected by three rows of palisades defended by musketry. The garrison of the outwork consisted of about 250 men. Of these

## 166      The Story of Wellington

ninety, including the colonel, were taken prisoners, and most of the others were either killed or drowned in the swollen stream. An attempt was made to succour the brave defenders, but the soldiers were driven back before they could come up to the Picurina. The possession of this outwork enabled Wellington to place guns within 300 yards of the body of the place, and on the following day two breaching batteries began their work of destruction, with the result that on the 6th April three breaches were declared to be practicable.

At ten o'clock that night the attempt was to be made, the 3rd Division under Picton escalading the castle, the 4th Division with General the Hon. C. Colville attacking the bastion of La Trinidad, the Light Division commanded by Colonel Barnard the bastion of Santa Maria, General Leith's 5th Division the bastion of San Vincente. The attack on the bastions was to be made by storming the breaches. Wellington stood on rising ground facing the main breach, accompanied by the Prince of Orange and Lord March.

"When the head of the Light Division arrived at the ditch of the place (the great breach) it was a beautiful moonlight night," Sir Harry Smith relates with the authority of a participant in the action.<sup>1</sup> "Old Alister Cameron, who was in command of four Companies of the 95th Regiment, extended along the counterscarp to attract the enemy's fire, while the column planted their ladders and descended, came up to Barnard and said, 'Now my men are ready; shall I begin?' 'No, certainly not,' says Barnard. The breach and the works were full of the enemy, looking quietly at us, but not fifty yards off and most prepared, although *not firing a shot*. So soon as our ladders were all ready posted, and the columns in the very act to move and rush down the ladders, Barnard called out, 'Now, Cameron!' and the first shot from us brought down such a hail of fire as I shall never forget, nor ever saw before or since. It was

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography," pp. 64-5.



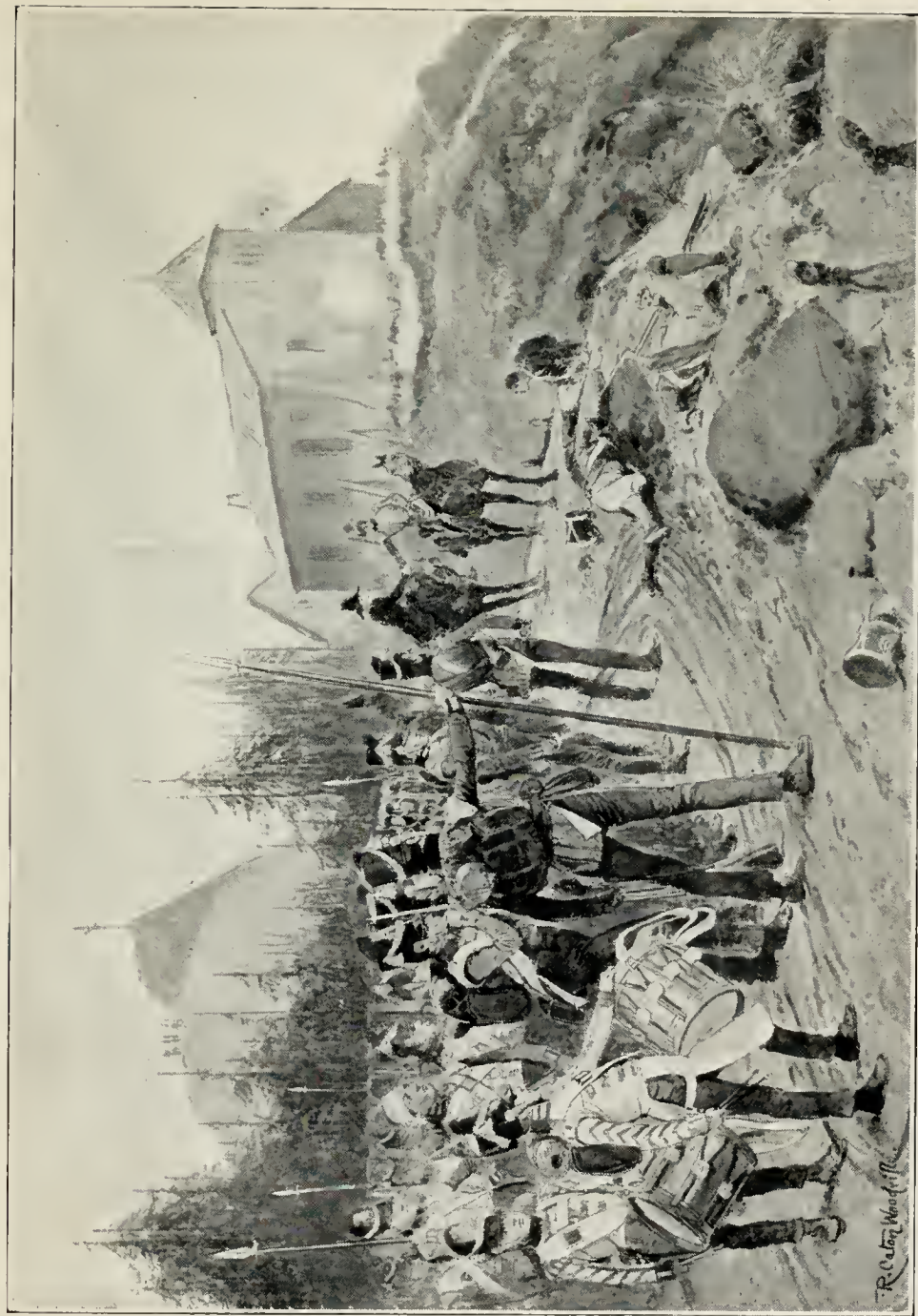
most murderous. We flew down the ladders and rushed at the breach, but we were broken, and carried no weight with us, although every soldier was a hero. The breach was covered by a breastwork from behind, and ably defended on the top by *chevaux-de-frises* of sword-blades, sharp as razors, chained to the ground ; while the ascent to the top of the breach was covered with planks with sharp nails in them. . . . One of the officers of the forlorn hope, Lieutenant Taggart of the 43rd, was hanging on my arm—a mode we adopted to help each other up, for the ascent was most difficult and steep. A Rifleman stood among the sword-blades on the top of one of the *chevaux-de-frises*. We made a glorious rush to follow, but, alas ! in vain. He was knocked over. My old captain, O'Hare, who commanded the storming party, was killed. All were awfully wounded except, I do believe, myself and little Freer of the 43rd. I had been some seconds at the *revêtement* of the bastion near the breach, and my red-coat pockets were literally filled with chips of stones splintered by musket-balls. Those not knocked down were driven back by this hail of mortality to the ladders. At the foot of them I saw poor Colonel M'Leod with his hands on his breast. . . . He said, 'Oh, Smith, I am mortally wounded. Help me up the ladder.' I said, 'Oh, no, dear fellow !' 'I am,' he said ; 'be quick !' I did so, and came back again. Little Freer and I said, 'Let us throw down the ladders ; the fellows shan't go out.' Some soldiers behind said, '. . . if you do we will bayonet you !' and we were literally forced up with the crowd. My sash had got loose, and one end of it was fast in the ladder, and the bayonet was very nearly applied, but the sash by pulling became loose. So soon as we got on the glacis, up came a fresh Brigade of the Portuguese of the 4th Division. I never saw any soldiers behave with more pluck. Down into the ditch we all went again, but the more we tried to get up, the more we were destroyed. The 4th Division followed us in marching up to the breach, and they made a most

## 168      The Story of Wellington

uncommon noise. The French saw us, but took no notice. . . . Both Divisions were fairly beaten back ; we never carried either breach (nominally there were two breaches). . . . There is no battle, day or night, I would not willingly react except this. The murder of our gallant officers and soldiers is not to be believed."

The attack on the castle was no less furious. Again and again the ladders were hurled back, but they were always put in place again, notwithstanding the fearful and continuous fire to which the assailants were subjected. Great beams of timber, stones, everything calculated to kill or maim a man were regarded as useful weapons by the defenders. Nothing came amiss to them in their determined defence. Scores of soldiers were flung down, when another minute of safety would have enabled them to secure a footing on the ramparts. They fell in the ditch, often injuring or killing others besides themselves. At last Lieutenant-Colonel Ridge managed to place two ladders at a spot which had not been used before, and where the wall was lower. The officer scaled one, followed by his men, and reached the rampart. The surprised garrison was repulsed, and very soon the castle was in the hands of the British. Poor Ridge did not live to reap his richly-deserved reward. He was killed before the conclusion of the assault.

A little while previous to the successful termination of the attack Dr James M<sup>c</sup>Gregor and Dr Forbes approached Wellington. "His lordship," says the former, "was so intent on what was going on, that I believe he did not observe us. Soon after our arrival, an officer came up with an unfavourable report of the assault, announcing that Colonel M<sup>c</sup>Leod and several officers were killed, with heaps of men who choked the approach to the breach. At the place where we stood we were within hearing of the voices of the assailants and the assailed, and it was now painful to notice that the voices of our countrymen had grown fainter, while the French cry of '*Avancez, étrillons ces Anglais,*' became



Wellington at Badajos congratulating Colonel Watson  
R. Caton Woodville





stronger. Another officer came up with still more unfavourable reports, that no progress was being made, for almost all the officers were killed, and none left to lead on the men, of whom a great many had fallen.

“At this moment I cast my eyes on the countenance of Lord Wellington, lit up by the glare of the torch held by Lord March. I never shall forget it to the last moment of my existence, and I could even now sketch it. The jaw had fallen, the face was of unusual length, while the torch-light gave his countenance a lurid aspect; but still the expression of the face was fair. Suddenly turning to me and putting his hand on my arm, he said, ‘Go over immediately to Picton, and tell him he must try if he cannot succeed on the castle.’ I replied, ‘My lord, I have not my horse with me, but I will walk as fast as I can, and I think I can find the way; I know part of the road is swampy.’ ‘No, no,’ he replied, ‘I beg your pardon, I thought it was De Lancey.’ I repeated my offer, saying I was sure I could find the way, but he said ‘No.’

“Another officer arrived, asking loudly, ‘Where is Lord Wellington?’ He came to announce that Picton was in the castle. He was desired instantly to go to the breach, and to request the stormers to renew their efforts, announcing what had befallen; and immediately Lord Wellington called for his own horse, and followed by the Prince and Lord March, rode to the breach.”

General Walker, leading the assault on San Vincente, experienced much the same rough treatment as the other divisions, but eventually succeeded in forcing his way into the town.

Philippon and a few hundred men managed to cross the Guadiana and found refuge in Fort San Christoval, only to surrender the following morning. The price paid by the victors in dead and wounded during the siege was nearly 5000 men; those of the enemy who laid down their arms numbered some 3800. The glory of the triumphant army was unfortunately tarnished by the gross miscon-

## 170      The Story of Wellington

duct of the men, and it was not until a gallows was raised that a stop was put to their evil ways.

Wellington was now anxious to meet Soult as soon as Badajoz was put in a state of defence, but when he received the ill news of the defeat of the French garrison the Marshal promptly retired to Seville. As Marmont was threatening Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo the British General had no alternative but to turn northward. He had to thank the Spaniards for this. By neglecting to provision the places they had practically placed them at the mercy of the enemy should he appear in considerable numbers. They were already blockading the latter place. "If Ciudad Rodrigo had been provisioned," Wellington writes to his brother Henry, "as I had a right to expect, there was nothing to prevent me from marching to Seville at the head of 40,000 men, the moment the siege of Badajoz was concluded." It was, of course, very important that the line of communication between Marmont and Soult should be impeded as much as possible, and Hill was given this important task. Failing to surprise Almaraz, the General pushed on to Fort Napoleon, on the other side of the Tagus, which was captured as well as Fort Ragusa. False information alone prevented Hill from following up his victories. He was told that Soult was in Estremadura, and he withdrew to the Guadiana.

Wellington began his advance, and on the 13th June crossed the Agueda. On his approach to Salamanca he at once laid siege to three newly-erected forts, "each defending the other." Marmont, knowing the likelihood of such an event, had wisely stored a good supply of food in them, so that there was a likelihood of their being able to hold out until he could succour them. The Marshal made one or two demonstrations to no good effect. He as obstinately declined to begin offensive measures as Wellington declined to be enticed to leave his strong position on the heights of San Christoval.

It took Wellington some time to secure the forts, which

were well built and equipped, but on the 27th they fell into his hands, two by storm and one by capitulation. The last mentioned was being attacked when the flag was hauled down and would doubtless have been captured had not the commander given way before the British made good their assault. Marmont thereupon retired behind the Douro to await reinforcements.

After having destroyed some military works at Alba de Tormes and garrisoned the castle of Salamanca with Spaniards, Wellington pushed forward and engaged Marmont's rearguard on the 2nd July. He took up a position on the left bank of the Douro, on the opposite side of that occupied by the enemy, who was shortly afterwards strengthened by the support of Bonnet's division from the Asturias. Near Tordesillas, which with Toro and Tudela was held by the French, the Marshal took courage and fought an action with Sir Stapleton Cotton, who was in command of Wellington's right, on the 18th July. To resist him was impossible, for he had secured all the bridges and many of the fords. The action began at dawn, and Cotton gallantly maintained his post, but the enemy managed to turn the left flank of the British position. "The troops," says Wellington in his official report, "retired in admirable order to Torrecilla de la Orden, having the enemy's whole army on their flank, or in their rear, and thence to Guareña, which river they passed under the same circumstances, and effected their junction with the army."

Wellington fell back to within two miles of Salamanca, his left resting on the Tormes, his right abutting on two hills called Los Aripes ; <sup>1</sup> Marmont secured the heights of Nuestra Señora de la Peña.

Many years after the battle of Salamanca, General Alava, a Spanish officer at the British headquarters, was at Wellington's breakfast table at Walmer, and he regaled the company with the story of the great soldier's breakfast on the 22nd July 1812. Croker has recorded it for us,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Maxwell, vol. i. p. 280.



## 172      The Story of Wellington

with the comment that the Duke listened "as quietly as if it related to another person."

"The Duke had been very busy all the morning, and had not thought of breakfast, and the staff had grown very hungry; at last, however, there was a pause (I think he said about two) near a farmyard surrounded by a wall, where a kind of breakfast was spread on the ground, and the staff alighted and fell to; while they were eating, the Duke rode into the enclosure; he refused to alight, and advised them to make haste; he seemed anxious and on the look-out. At last they persuaded him to take a bit of bread and the leg of a cold roast fowl, which he was eating without knife from his fingers, when suddenly they saw him throw the leg of the fowl far away over his shoulder, and gallop out of the yard, calling to them to follow him. The fact is, he had been waiting to have the French *sighted* at a certain gap in the hills, and that was to be the signal of a long-meditated and long-suspended attack. 'I knew,' says Alava, with grave drollery, 'that something *very serious* was about to happen when *an article so precious as the leg of a roast fowl was thus thrown away.*'" Croker adds that "the Duke sat by with his head inclined, quite silent, but with a quiet smile which seemed to say that the narration was a good deal pleasanter than the reality had been."

Wellington was able to seize the nearer hill but the French secured the other, while another miniature height named Nuestra Señora de la Peña was the centre of a most desperate conflict, which continued through the long hours of the day. Marmont made the fatal error of dividing his army, sending Thomière's division to turn the British right flank, with intent to cut off all hope of retreat on the part of Wellington, should he wish to do so, by means of the Ciudad Rodrigo road. This movement separated the French left wing from the centre, and this it was that caused the British Commander to fling away the dearly prized leg of a chicken.

After looking through his glass with wrapt attention



Wellington turned to his Spanish colleague with the words, "My dear Alava, Marmont is undone!" His active brain told him at once of his enemy's mistake. Having made his dispositions he ordered Pakenham, his brother-in-law, to throw the 3rd Division into line and cross the march of Thomière's columns. "It shall be done; give me your hand," replied that energetic officer. He hurled the Portuguese cavalry, two squadrons of the 14th Light Dragoons, and the "Fighting 3rd" at the flank and rear of the French left. Other divisions under Cole, Leith, Bradford, and Cotton attacked the enemy in front. "No sooner was Pakenham in motion towards the heights," says one who took part in the battle, "than the ridge he was about to assail was crowned with twenty pieces of cannon, while in the rear of this battery were seen Foy's division, endeavouring to regain its place in the combat. A flat space of 1000 yards in breadth was to be crossed before Pakenham could reach the height.

"The French batteries opened a heavy fire, while the two brigades of artillery, commanded by Captain Douglas, posted on a rising ground behind the 3rd Division, replied to them with much warmth. Pakenham's men may thus be said to have been between two fires, that of our own guns firing over their heads, while the French balls passed through their ranks, ploughing up the ground in every direction; but the veteran troops which composed the 3rd Division were not shaken even by this.

"Wallace's three regiments advanced in open columns, until within 250 yards of the ridge held by the French infantry. Foy's column, 5000 strong, had by this time reached their ground, while in their front the face of the hill had been hastily garnished with riflemen. All were impatient to engage, and the calm but stern advance of Pakenham's right brigade was received with beating of drums and loud cheers from the French, whose light troops, hoping to take advantage of the time which the deploying into line would take, ran down the face of the

## 174      The Story of Wellington

hill in a state of great excitement, but Pakenham, who was naturally of a boiling spirit and hasty temper, was on this day perfectly cool. He told Wallace to form line from open column without halting, and thus the different companies, by throwing forward their right shoulders, were in a line without the slow manœuvre of deployment.

“Astonished at the rapidity of the movement, the French riflemen commenced an irregular and hurried fire, and even at this early stage of the battle a looker-on could, from the difference in the demeanour of the troops of the two nations, form a tolerably correct opinion of what the result would be. Regardless of the fire of the riflemen, and the showers of grape and canister, Pakenham continued to press forward; his centre suffered, but still advanced; his right and left, being less oppressed by the weight of the fire, continued to advance at a more rapid pace, and as his wings inclined forward and outstripped the centre, his right brigade assumed the form of a crescent. The manœuvre was a bold as well as a novel one, and the appearance of the brigade imposing and unique; because it so happened that all the British officers were in front of their men—a rare occurrence. The French officers were also in front, but their relative duties were widely different—the latter encouraging their men into the heat of the battle—the former keeping their devoted soldiers back—what a splendid national contrast!”

When the brow of the hill was reached the men were subjected to a murderous hail of fire from Foy's division. Nearly all of Wallace's first rank, as well as many officers, fell beneath it. But the others, urged by their commander, pressed on with fixed bayonets, and the French troops were forced backward. Thomière was amongst the killed, and many were taken prisoners in the rout which followed.

“Immediately on our left,” the narrative continues, “the 5th Division were discharging volleys against the French 4th; and Pack's brigade could be seen mounting

the Aripeles height, but disregarding everything except the complete destruction of the column before him, Pakenham followed it with the brigade of Wallace, supported by the reserves of his division.

“The battle at this point would have been decided on the moment, had the heavy horse under Le Marchant been near enough to sustain him. The confusion of the enemy was so great that they became mixed pell-mell together, without any regard to order or regularity, and it was manifest that nothing short of a miracle could save Foy from total destruction. Sir Edward Pakenham continued to press on at the head of Wallace’s brigade, but Foy’s troops outran him. Had Le Marchant been aware of this state of the combat, or been near enough to profit by it, Pakenham would have settled the business by six o’clock instead of seven. An hour, at any period during a battle, is a serious loss of time, but in this action every moment was of vital import. Day was rapidly drawing to a close: the Tormes was close behind the army of Marmont, ruin stared him in the face; in a word, his left wing was doubled up—lost; and Pakenham could have turned to the support of the 4th and 5th Divisions, had our cavalry been ready to back Wallace at the moment he pierced the column. This, beyond doubt, was the moment by which to profit, that the enemy might not have time to re-collect himself; but, while Le Marchant was preparing to take part in the combat, Foy, with admirable presence of mind, remedied the terrible confusion of his division, and calling up a first brigade to his support, once more led his men into the fight, assumed the offensive, and Pakenham was now about to be assailed in turn. This was the most critical moment of the battle; Boyer’s horsemen stood before us, inclining towards our right, which was flanked by two squadrons of the 14th Dragoons and two regiments of Portuguese cavalry; but we had little dependence upon the Portuguese, and it behoved us to look to ourselves.

“Led on by the ardour of conquest, we had followed



the column until at length we found ourselves in an open plain, intersected with cork trees, opposed by a multitude, who, reinforced, again rallied, and turned upon us with fury. Pakenham, Wallace, Seton, and Mackie, rode along the line from wing to wing, almost from rank to rank, and fulfilled the functions of adjutants in assisting the officers to reorganise the tellings-off of the men for square. Meanwhile the first battalion of the 5th drove back some squadrons of Boyer's dragoons ; the other six regiments were fast approaching the point held by Wallace, but the French cavalry in our front and upon our right flank caused Pakenham some uneasiness.

"The peals of musketry along the centre still continued without intermission ; the smoke was so thick that nothing to our left was distinguishable ; some men of the 5th Division got intermingled with ours ; the dry grass was set on fire by the numerous cartridge papers that strewn the field of battle ; the air was scorching, and the smoke rolling on in huge volumes, nearly suffocated us.

"A loud cheering was heard in our rear—the brigade turned half round, supposing themselves about to be attacked by the French cavalry. A few seconds passed—the trampling of horse was heard—the smoke cleared away, and the heavy brigade of Le Marchant was seen coming forward in a line at a canter. 'Open right and left,' was an order quickly obeyed ; the line opened, the cavalry passed through the intervals, and forming rapidly in our front prepared for their work.

"The French column, which a moment before held so imposing an attitude, became startled at this unexpected sight. A victorious and highly excited infantry pressed closely upon them ; a splendid brigade of three regiments of cavalry, ready to burst through their ill-arranged and beaten column, while no appearance of succour was at hand to protect them, was enough to appal the boldest intrepidity. The plain was filled with the vast multitude ; retreat was impossible, and the troopers came still pouring in, to join their comrades



already prepared for the attack. It was too much for their nerves, and they sank under its influence, although they bravely made an effort to face the danger.

“Hastily, yet with much regularity, all things considered, they attempted to get into the square; but Le Marchant’s brigade galloped forward before the evolution was half completed.

“The column hesitated, wavered, tottered, and then stood still! The motion of the countless bayonets, as they clashed together, might be likened to a forest about to be assailed by a tempest, whose first warnings announce the ravage it is about to inflict. Foy’s division vomited forth a dreadful volley of fire as the horsemen thundered across the flat; Le Marchant was killed,<sup>1</sup> and fell downright in the midst of the French bayonets; but his brigade pierced through the vast mass, killing or trampling down all before them. The conflict was severe, and the troopers fell thick and fast, but their long, heavy swords, cut through bone as well as flesh. . . .

“Such as got away from the sabres of the horsemen, sought safety among the ranks of our infantry, and scrambling under the horses, ran to us for protection, like men who, having escaped the first shock of a wreck, will cling to any broken spar, no matter how little to be depended on. Hundreds of beings frightfully disfigured, in whom the human face and form were almost obliterated—black with dust, worn down with fatigue, and covered with sabre cuts and blood—threw themselves among us for safety. Not a man was bayoneted—not even molested or plundered.”

The battle still raged with unabated fury; “immediately in front of the 5th Division, Leith fell wounded as he led on his men, but his division carried the point in dispute, and drove the enemy before them up the hill.

“While these events were taking place on the right, the 4th Division, which formed the centre of the army, met

<sup>1</sup> A monument to the memory of Major-General Gaspard le Marchant is in St Paul’s Cathedral.

## 178      The Story of Wellington

with a serious opposition. The more distant Aripeles, occupied by the French 122nd, whose numbers did not count more than 400, supported by a few pieces of cannon, was left to the Portuguese brigade of General Pack, amounting to 2000 bayonets. Falsely, though with well-founded reliance—their former conduct taken into the scale—Cole's division advanced into the plain, confident that all was right with Pack's troops, and a terrible struggle between them and Bonnet's corps took place. It was, however, but of short duration. Bonnet's troops were driven back in confusion, and up to this moment all had gone on well.

“The three British Divisions engaged, overthrew all obstacles, and the battle might be said to be won, had Pack's formidable brigade (formidable in numbers, at least) fulfilled their part—but these men totally failed in their effort to take the height occupied only by a few hundred Frenchmen, and thus gave the park of artillery that was posted with them, full liberty to turn its efforts against the rear and flank of Cole's soldiers. Nothing could be worse than the state in which the 4th Division was now placed, and the battle, which ought to have been and had been in a manner won, was still in doubt.

“Bonnet, seeing the turn which Pack's failure had wrought in his favour, re-formed his men, and advanced against Cole, while the fire from the battery and small arms on the Aripeles height completed the confusion. Cole fell wounded; half of his division were cut off; the remainder in full retreat, and Bonnet's troops pressing on in a compact body, made it manifest that a material change had taken place in the battle, and that ere it was gained some ugly up-hill work was yet to be done.

“Marshal Beresford, who arrived at this moment, galloped up to the head of a brigade of the 5th Division, which he took out of the second line, and for a moment covered the retreat of Cole's troops; but this force—composed of Portuguese—was insufficient to arrest the progress of the enemy, who advanced in the full confi-

dence of an assured victory, and at this moment Beresford was carried off the field wounded. Bonnet's troops advanced, uttering loud cheers, while the entire of Cole's division and Spry's brigade of Portuguese were routed. Our centre was thus endangered. Boyer's dragoons, after the overthrow of the French left, countermarched, and moved rapidly to the support of Bonnet ; they were also close in the track of his infantry ; and the fate of this momentous battle might be said to hang by a hair. The fugitives of the 7th and 4th French Divisions ran to the succour of Bonnet, and by the time they had joined him, his force had, indeed, assumed a formidable aspect, and thus reinforced it stood in an attitude far different from what it would have done, had Pack's brigade succeeded in its attack.

" Lord Wellington, who saw what had taken place by the failure of Pack's troops, ordered up the 6th Division to the support of the 4th, and the battle, although it was half-past 8 o'clock at night, recommenced with the same fury as at the outset.

" Clinton's division, consisting of 6000 bayonets, rapidly advanced to occupy its place in the combat, and relieve the 4th from the awkward predicament in which it was placed, and essayed to gain what was lost by the failure of Pack's troops, in their feeble effort to wrest the Aripeles height from a few brave Frenchmen ; but they were received by Bonnet's troops at the point of the bayonet, and the fire opened against them seemed to be three-fold more heavy than that sustained by the 3rd and 5th Divisions. It was nearly dark, and the great glare of light caused by the thunder of the artillery, the continued blaze of musketry, and the burning grass, gave to the face of the hill a novel and terrific appearance—it was one vast sheet of flame, and Clinton's men looked as if they were attacking a burning mountain, the crater of which was defended by a barrier of shining steel. But nothing could stop the intrepid valour of the 6th Division, as they advanced with desperate resolution to carry the hill.



## 180 The Story of Wellington

“The troops posted on the face of it to arrest their advance were trampled down and destroyed at the first charge, and each reserve sent forward to extricate them met with the same fate.

“Still Bonnet’s reserves having attained their place in the fight, and the fugitives from Foy’s division joining them at the moment, prolonged the battle until dark.

“These men, besmeared with blood, dust, and clay, half naked, and some carrying only broken weapons, fought with a fury not to be surpassed; but their impetuosity was at length calmed by the bayonets of Clinton’s troops, and they no longer fought for victory, but for safety. After a desperate struggle they were driven from their last hold in confusion, and a general and overwhelming charge, which the nature of the ground enabled Clinton’s troops to make, carried this ill-formed mass of desperate soldiers before them, as a shattered wreck borne along by the force of some mighty current. The mingled mass of fugitives fled to the woods and to the river for safety, and under cover of the night, succeeded in gaining the pass of Alba, over the Tormes. It was 10 o’clock at night—the battle was ended.”

Marmont, who was wounded in the early part of the fight, lost 15,000 men, of whom 7000 surrendered to the British. The victors had nearly 700 officers and men killed, and over 4500 returned as wounded and missing. Six British Generals, including Wellington, whose thigh was grazed by a musket ball which had fortunately passed through his holster before it hit him, received injuries, and Le Marchant, as already mentioned, was shot. Of the enemy four Generals were wounded and three killed, sufficient proof of the sanguinary nature of the long-continued contest. The victory would have been even more complete had the Spanish garrison at Alba de Tormes remained at their post instead of withdrawing without informing the Commander-in-Chief of their intention. As a consequence the enemy were enabled to use the bridge there and make good their escape.



## CHAPTER XVI

# The Closing Battles of the Peninsular War (1812-14)

*“ In the whole of my experience I never saw an army so strongly posted as the French at the battle of Toulouse. There ought to have been an accurate plan and description made of the whole affair as a matter of professional science.”*

WELLINGTON.

MARMONT'S army was not the only one in retreat. King Joseph, with 15,000 troops, had left Madrid with the set purpose of joining the Marshal, but when he received news of the battle of Salamanca he retreated on Valencia, where Suchet's army was posted, and peremptorily ordered Soult to evacuate Andalusia. This would enable him to bring 90,000 men to bear on his victorious enemy. His withdrawal from Madrid enabled Wellington to enter the capital on the 12th August 1812, Marmont, or rather Clausel, who had temporarily succeeded him, being driven back upon Burgos. The evacuation of the southern province was doubtless very gratifying to the Spaniards, but the threatened concentration of such a vast array of troops placed the Anglo-Portuguese army in an extremely unhappy position. The force at Wellington's disposal numbered 60,000 men, and although an additional 6000 had just landed at Alicante, in Valencia, it was evident that they would be of little service at the moment.

## 182      The Story of Wellington

When he became aware that Soult was about to abandon Andalusia he left part of his army to occupy Madrid, and with the remainder set out in the hope of being able to crush Clausel, who was at Valladolid. This he was unable to do, for the enemy retired from position to position. He followed him to Burgos, which Wellington entered, the French General meanwhile encamping on the banks of the Ebro, where he shortly afterwards received substantial reinforcements under Caffarelli and Souham the latter of whom arrived as Marmont's successor. Wellington was also joined by some 11,000 Spanish troops of the army of Galicia. He at once laid siege to the castle above the town, which was strongly defended, and although the troops worked with praiseworthy ardour and four attempts were made to take it by assault, he was eventually forced to abandon the idea, and for a very important reason. Soult had joined King Joseph, and the combined army was on its way to Madrid. He had wasted a precious month, time which the French had used to full advantage.

It is related that one of the Irish regiments incurred his displeasure during the siege, and some of its members asked permission for it to lead one of the assaults. Their wish was granted, with the result that nearly all the men laid down their lives in the desperate undertaking. When Wellington passed a little later, a soldier who had lost both his legs saluted and cried, "Arrah, maybe ye'r satisfied now, you hooky-nosed vagabond!" The Commander could not restrain a smile, and promptly sent assistance. The Irishman ended his days in Chelsea Hospital.

Sending word to Hill to abandon Madrid and meet him on the Tormes, Wellington skilfully withdrew his men from Burgos, and although his rear-guard was much harassed by Souham's troops, he formed a junction with his lieutenant near the battlefield of Salamanca. On arrival on the Tormes they were almost face to face with the united army, but divided counsels reigned, and he

## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 183

skilfully eluded the French, although they turned his position. Aided by a dense fog, Wellington managed to slip away unperceived. After a sharp engagement at a ford of the Huebra, the pursuers abandoned the attempt to secure the roads to Ciudad Rodrigo, which place was reached by Wellington on the 18th November. Soult retired to Toledo, Souham to Valladolid, and Joseph to Segovia.

A pen-sketch of the men during this terrible retreat tells us that "such a set of scare-crows never was seen. It was difficult to say what they were, as the men's coats were patched with grey, some had blankets over them, and most were barefooted; every step they took was up to the knees in mud; women and sick men were actually sticking in it. . . . A brigade of cavalry, however, which was covering the rear, had left Lisbon but a short time before, and was in high order. The clothing of the men scarcely soiled, and the horses sleek and fat, made a strange contrast with the others, especially the company of artillery that had served in the batteries before Burgos. We at first took the latter for prisoners, as they were mostly in French clothing, many of them riding in the carriages with the sick and wounded, drawn, some by oxen, and some by mules and horses. I never saw British soldiers in such a state."

Wellington and his men then went into cantonments, the former making his headquarters at Freneda. Much was done to improve the *morale* of the troops, who had got into a very insubordinate state. Reinforcements came to hand, and Wellington worked hard to reorganize the Spanish army, of which he had been appointed Generalissimo after the battle of Salamanca. He had also been raised to the rank of Marquis, thanked by both Houses of Parliament, and presented with £100,000. He paid a visit to the Cortes, made a speech, and wrote a long letter to one of the Deputies in which he criticized "the powers that be" in no uncertain way, adding, however, a number of measures which would "give your

## 184      The Story of Wellington

Government some chance of standing, and your country some chance of avoiding farther revolutions." The whole communication must be studied to be fully appreciated.<sup>1</sup> "The Government and the Assembly," he says in one passage, "instead of drawing together, are like two independent powers, jealous and afraid of each other; and the consequence is, that the machine of Government is at a stand. To this add that the whole system is governed by little local views, as propounded by the daily press of Cadiz, of all others the least enlightened and the most licentious." "I will fight for Spain as long as she is the enemy of France, whatever may be her system of government," he adds, "but I cannot avoid seeing and lamenting the evils which await the country if you do not retrace your steps, let what will be the result of the military operations of the war. . . ."

He advised the establishment of a permanent Regency, "with all the powers allotted by the constitution to the King, in the hands of one person." He, or she, should be aided by a Council, whose five members should superintend the Department de Estado, the Interior and Ultramar, Gracia y Justicia, Hacienda, and of War and of Marine respectively, each being responsible for the department under his superintendence. He suggested either turning "the Council of State into a House of Lords," or making "a House of Lords of the Grandees, giving then concurrent powers of legislation with the Cortes; and you should leave the patronage now in the hands of the Council of State in the hands of the Crown."

In these days of Socialism the following remarks, which occur in the same letter, are of more than passing interest. "The theory of all legislation," he says, "is founded in justice; and, if we could be certain that legislative assemblies would on all occasions act according to the principles of justice, there would be no occasion for those checks and guards which we have seen

<sup>1</sup> It is given in Gurwood, vol. x. pp. 61-66.



## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 185

established under the best systems. Unfortunately, however, we have seen that legislative assemblies are swayed by the fears and passions of individuals; when unchecked, they are tyrannical and unjust; nay, more: it unfortunately happens too frequently that the most tyrannical and unjust measures are the most popular. Those measures are particularly popular which deprive rich and powerful individuals of their properties under the pretence of the public advantage; and I tremble for a country in which, as in Spain, there is no barrier for the preservation of private property, excepting the justice of a legislative assembly possessing supreme powers."

In summing up the result of his operations in the field during 1812, Wellington tells the Earl of Liverpool on the 23rd November, that notwithstanding adverse criticism in the newspapers, "it is in fact the most successful campaign in all its circumstances, and has produced for the cause more important results than any campaign in which a British army has been engaged for the last century. We have taken by siege Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, and Salamanca; and the Retiro surrendered. In the meantime the Allies have taken Astorga, Guadalaxara, and Consuegra, besides other places taken by Duran and Sir H. Popham. In the months elapsed since January this army has sent to England little short of 20,000 prisoners, and they have taken and destroyed or have themselves the use of the enemy's arsenals in Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Valladolid, Madrid, Astorga, Seville, the line before Cadiz, etc.; and upon the whole we have taken and destroyed, or we now possess, little short of 3000 pieces of artillery. The siege of Cadiz has been raised, and all the countries south of the Tagus have been cleared of the enemy.

"We should have retained still greater advantages, I think, and should have remained in possession of Castile and Madrid during the winter, if I could have taken Burgos, as I ought early in October, or if Ballasteros had

## 186      The Story of Wellington

moved upon Alcares as he was ordered, instead of intriguing for his own aggrandizement.

“The fault of which I was guilty in the expedition to Burgos was, not that I undertook the operation with inadequate means, but that I took there the most inexperienced instead of the best troops. . . . I see that a disposition already exists to blame the Government for the failure of the siege of Burgos. The Government had nothing to say to the siege. It was entirely my own act. In regard to means, there were ample means both at Madrid and at Santander for the siege of the strongest fortress. That which was wanting at both places was means of transporting ordnance and military stores to the place where it was desirable to use them.

“The people of England, so happy as they are in every respect, so rich in resources of every description, having the use of such excellent roads, etc., will not readily believe that important results here frequently depend upon 50 or 60 mules more or less, or a few bundles of straw to feed them ; but the fact is so, notwithstanding their incredulity. . . .”

When Wellington was ready for his 1813 campaign he had 75,000 British and Portuguese at his disposal, and some 60,000 Spaniards, in addition to the irregular bands which were the bane of the enemy. The different French armies totalled some 200,000 troops, but it was deemed necessary to send 40,000 of these, under Clausel and Foy, to exterminate the *guerilleros*, which was to Wellington's advantage, especially as it was impossible for Napoleon, now deeply involved owing to the disastrous Russian campaign, to send further reinforcements. Soult was withdrawn, with 20,000 men, to oppose the Russian advance. By way of further encouragement, Andalusia, Estremadura, Galacia, and the Asturias no longer sheltered the enemy. The British left was under Graham, the right under Hill, and the centre under the Commander-in-Chief. The first marched upon Valladolid, the French retreating before him, and was joined near

## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 187

Zamora on the 1st June 1813 by Wellington, followed two days later by Hill. The French were deceived by these movements, for they expected the main attack to be made from Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida with the object of occupying Madrid. This was far from Wellington's purpose, which was to carry on the war in the northern provinces, sever the French communications with the homeland, and force them to withdraw to the Pyrenees. King Joseph hastily retired from Valladolid and reached Burgos. On the approach of Wellington to that town, the fortifications were blown up and the enemy fell back beyond the Ebro.

"When I heard and saw this explosion (for I was within a few miles, and the effect was tremendous)," Wellington remarks, "I made a sudden resolution forthwith—instantly to cross the Ebro, and endeavour to push the French to the Pyrenees. We had heard of the battles of Lutzen and Bautzen and of the armistice,<sup>1</sup> and the affairs of the Allies looked very ill. Some of my officers remonstrated with me about the impudence of crossing the Ebro, and advised me to take up the line of the Ebro, etc. I asked them what they meant by taking up the line of the Ebro, a river 300 miles long, and what good I was to do along that line? In short, I would not listen to the advice; and that very evening (or the very next morning) I crossed the river and pushed the French till I afterwards beat them at Vittoria."

"We continued to advance," writes a soldier of the 71st Regiment who fought in the battle, "until the 20th of June; when reaching the neighbourhood of Vittoria, we encamped upon the face of a hill. Provisions were very scarce. We had not a bit of tobacco, and were

<sup>1</sup> Lützen was fought on the 3rd May 1813, and Bautzen on the 20th and 21st May. In both battles the Prussians and Russians, who at the opening of the Leipzig campaign bore all the fighting for the Allies, were defeated. The only result of the armistice was that Austria threw in her lot with Russia, Prussia, and Sweden.—See the author's "Story of Napoleon," pp. 296-299.



## 188      The Story of Wellington

smoking leaves and herbs. Colonel Cadogan rode away, and got us half a pound of tobacco a man, which was most welcome.

“Next morning we got up as usual. The first pipes played for parade ; the second did not play at the usual time. We began to suspect all was not right. We remained thus until eleven o’clock ; then received orders to fall in, and follow the line of march. During our march we fell to one side, to allow a brigade of guns to pass us at full speed. ‘Now,’ said my comrades, ‘we will have work to do before night.’ We crossed a river, and, as we passed through a village, we saw, on the other side of the road, the French camp, and their fires still burning, just as they had left them. Not a shot had been fired at this time. We observed a large Spanish column moving along the heights on our right. We halted, and drew up in column. Orders were given to brush out our locks, oil them, and examine our flints. We being in the rear, these were soon followed by orders to open out from the centre, to allow the 71st to advance. Forward we moved up the hill. The firing was now very heavy. Our rear had not engaged, before word came for the doctor to assist Colonel Cadogan, who was wounded. Immediately we charged up the hill, the piper playing, ‘Hey Johnny Cope.’ The French had possession of the top, but we soon forced them back, and drew up in column on the height ; sending out four companies to our left to skirmish. The remainder moved on to the opposite height. As we advanced driving them before us, a French officer, a pretty fellow, was pricking and forcing his men to stand. They heeded him not—he was very harsh. ‘Down with him !’ cried one near me ; and down he fell, pierced by more than one ball.

“Scarce were we upon the height, when a heavy column, dressed in great-coats, with white covers on their hats, exactly resembling the Spanish, gave us a volley, which put us to the right about at double-quick time down the hill, the French close behind, through the



## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 189

whins. The four companies got the word the French were on them. They likewise thought them Spaniards, until they got a volley that killed or wounded almost every one of them. We retired to the height, covered by the 50th, who gave the pursuing column a volley which checked their speed. We moved up the remains of our shattered regiment to the height. Being in great want of ammunition, we were again served with sixty rounds a man, and kept up our fire for some time, until the bugle sounded to cease firing. . . .

“ At this time the Major had the command, our second Colonel being wounded. There were not 300 of us on the height able to do duty, out of above 1000 who drew rations in the morning. The cries of the wounded were most heart-rending.

“ The French, on the opposite height, were getting under arms ; we could give no assistance, as the enemy appeared to be six to one of us. Our orders were to maintain the height while there was a man of us. The word was given to shoulder arms. The French, at the same moment, got under arms. The engagement began in the plains. The French were amazed, and soon put to the right about, through Vittoria. We followed, as quick as our weary limbs could carry us. Our legs were full of thorns, and our feet bruised upon the roots of the trees. Coming to a bean field at the bottom of the heights, immediately the column was broke, and every man filled his haversack. We continued to advance until it was dark, and then encamped on a height above Vittoria. . . . I had fired 108 rounds this day.”

According to the official figures the British lost 740 men by death and 4174 were wounded, out of a total strength of 80,000. The captures included 151 guns, 415 caissons, 14,249 rounds of ammunition, nearly 2,000,000 musket ball cartridges, 40,668 lbs. of gunpowder, fifty-six forage waggons, forty-four forge waggons, treasure to the amount of £1,000,000, pictures by Velasquez and other masters, jewellery, public and

## 190      The Story of Wellington

private baggage. King Joseph's carriage, and Jourdan's bâton. The last-mentioned was given by Wellington to the Prince Regent, who with becoming fitness sent the donor a Field-Marshal's bâton. The French had 65,000 men engaged in the battle of Vittoria, of whom some 6000 were killed and wounded, and 1000 taken prisoners.

The defeated army crossed the Pyrenees and marched to Bayonne, where it was joined by the troops under Foy and Clausel, who had been pursued by the Allies. "To hustle the French out of Spain before they were reinforced," had been Wellington's object, and he had carried it out completely. As the garrisons of the fortresses of Pampeluna and San Sebastian had been strengthened, the former by Joseph and the latter by Foy, during their retreat, Wellington now turned his attention to them. Although the army under Suchet was the only one now left in the Peninsula, it occupied Catalonia and part of Valencia, and might therefore attack Wellington's right flank.

Napoleon was at Dresden when he heard of his brother's disaster at Vittoria, and he was in no mood for soft words. He recalled both Joseph and Jourdan, and gave the command to Soult. "It is hard to imagine anything so inconceivable as what is now going on in Spain," the Emperor writes to Savary on the 3rd July 1813. "The King could have collected 100,000 picked men: they might have beaten the whole of England." He blamed himself for the "mistaken consideration" he had shown his brother, "who not only does not know how to command, but does not even know his own value enough to leave the military command alone."

Soult reached Bayonne on the 12th July, and thirteen days later had marched on Pampeluna with 73,000 troops, bent on relieving one or other of the fortresses, perhaps both. He attacked the British right at Roncesvalles and turned the position; Hill was attacked at the head of the valley of Baztan and was obliged to

## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 191

withdraw. Wellington at once raised the siege of San Sebastian, which had been carried on by Sir Thomas Graham, and contented himself by blockading the fortress. He immediately concentrated his right and centre at Sorauren, near Pampeluna. The series of fights which took place at this time is known as the battles of the Pyrenees. On the 27th Wellington arrived, and a rousing cheer greeted him, which it is said deterred the French from making anything but a partial attack. Probably the truth of the matter is that Soult hesitated because he was expecting additional forces with d'Erlon, for the Marshal was scarcely likely to be overawed by a greeting. A corporal, unable to restrain his enthusiasm as the Commander-in-Chief rode along the line, shouted out to the intense amusement of all, "There goes the little blackguard what whops the French!"<sup>1</sup>

Soult was pointed out to the General by a spy. "Yonder," Wellington is reported to have said, "is a great but cautious general; he will delay his attack to know the reason of those cheers; that will give time for my reinforcements to come up, and I shall beat him." As a matter of fact, the 6th Division of infantry, to which Wellington had referred, did arrive, and "bludgeon work," to use his expression, took place on the 28th, the anniversary of Talavera. The reinforcements had scarcely secured their position, their right resting on Orcain and their left on the heights overlooking the valley of the Lanz, than a very determined attack was made by the enemy. They were driven back, and made an attempt on the hill occupied by the 7th caçadores and Ross's brigade of the 4th Division. They obtained possession of it for a short time until driven down. When the battle became general the 10th Portuguese regiment was overpowered, necessitating the withdrawal of Ross. Wellington then ordered two regiments to charge the enemy on the heights and those on the left,

<sup>1</sup> "Personal Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington by Francis, the first Earl of Ellesmere," p. 129. (London, 1903.)



## 192      The Story of Wellington

with the result that the French were "driven down with immense loss." "Every regiment," says Wellington, "charged with the bayonet, and the 40th, 7th, 20th, and 23rd, four different times." Of Wellington's 16,000 troops he lost 2600 killed and wounded, the French 1800 out of 20,000. The Portuguese behaved "admirably," and the Commander-in-Chief "had every reason to be satisfied with the conduct of the Spanish regiments El Principe and Pravia."

By sunset Soult's attacks had waned, and on the following morning he began to retreat, although he received reinforcements to the number of 18,000 troops. On the 30th he attacked Hill to no good effect, and Wellington forced the French to retire from a strong position they had taken up. The pursuit continued until the 1st August, when it was discontinued, for the Allies were in possession of the passes and the arduous exertion of the troops was beginning to tell upon them.

Wellington again took up his headquarters at Lesaca. Writing to Graham he says, "I hope that Soult will not feel any inclination to renew his expedition. The French army must have suffered greatly. Between the 25th of last month and 2nd of this, they were engaged seriously not less than ten times; on many occasions in attacking very strong positions, in others beat from them or pursued. I understand that their officers say that they have lost 15,000 men. I thought so; but as *they* say so, I now think *more*. It is strange enough that our diminution of strength to the 31st does not exceed 1500 men, although, I believe, our casualties are 6000." It was on the 31st that San Sebastian fell, the castle capitulating shortly afterwards, and the day is also noteworthy for Soult's attack on San Marcial, which was repulsed by Spanish troops, the enemy retiring across the Bidassoa. Unfortunately, Sir John Murray made no headway against Suchet in the east of Spain, and was superseded by Lord William Bentinck, who besieged Tarragona, which his predecessor had evacuated. Although he



## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 193

was compelled to retire on the approach of the French Marshal, the city was eventually occupied by the British troops. Their entry into Villa Franca was marred by the rout of the advanced guard in the pass of Ordal, necessitating their retreat towards Tarragona.

It is obviously impossible to unravel with any approach to detail the tangled skein of complicated manœuvres which took place at this period, perhaps the most trying and exacting of the war in the Peninsula. Gleig, however, gives one picturesque touch to an involved picture which reveals more of the personality of the great General than many pages of military movements, and is infinitely more valuable for the purposes of a life story. "Lord Wellington," he records, "after directing a Spanish column to move up a glen towards a specific point, looked at his watch, and observed to those about him that it would take the men so much time to perform the journey. He added that he was tired, and dismounting from his horse, wrapped himself in his cloak and went to sleep. A crowd of officers stood round him, and among others some Spanish generals, whose astonishment at the coolness of their chief was expressed in audible whispers. For the very crisis of the struggle was impending, and the French being in greater strength upon the spot, seemed to have the ball at their foot. Now, among the officers of the headquarters' staff, there were several who had never approved the passage of the Ebro. These began to speak their minds freely, and one, the bravest of the brave, the gallant Colonel Gordon, exclaimed, 'I always thought it would come to this. I was sure we should make a mess of it, if we got entangled among the Pyrenees, and now see if my words don't come true.' Lord Wellington happened to awake just as Gordon thus unburdened his conscience. He sat up, and without addressing himself to anyone in particular, extended his right hand open, and said, as he closed it, 'I have them all in my hand, just like that.' Not another word was spoken. The Spaniards had reached the top of the

## 194      The Story of Wellington

glen ; Lord Wellington and his attendants remounted their horses, and the battle was renewed."

On the 7th October 1813 Wellington passed the Bidassoa with the left of his army. Soult was attacked and driven back with the loss of eight pieces of cannon, taken by the Allies in the captured redoubts and batteries. The fighting was continued on the following day, after the fog which obscured the enemy's position had lifted, when a rock occupied by the French to the right of their position was carried "in the most gallant style" by the Spaniards, who immediately afterwards distinguished themselves by carrying an entrenchment on a hill which protected the right of the camp of Sarre. Soult withdrew during the following night, and took up a series of entrenched positions behind the Nivelle, leaving, as Alison so eloquently puts it, "a vast hostile army, for the first time since the Revolution, permanently encamped within the territory of France. And thus was England, which throughout the contest had been the most persevering and resolute of all the opponents of the Revolution, and whose government had never yet either yielded to the victories or acknowledged the chiefs which it had placed at the head of affairs, the first of all the forces of Europe who succeeded in planting its victorious standards on the soil of France."

On the 10th November, a little over a week after the surrender of Pampeluna through starvation, for the fall of which he had waited before resuming offensive operations, Wellington, with an army of about 90,000 men, attacked the enemy's position, an exceedingly strong one, the right extending from the sea to St Jean de Luz, the left from Bidarray to St Jean Pied de Port, the centre between Amotz and Ascain. The enemy were driven out of the lines and followed over the river, with a loss of 4200 men and no fewer than 51 guns, the Allies losing about 2500 killed and wounded.

"Our loss," says Wellington, "although severe, has not been so great as might have been expected, consider-

## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 195

ing the strength of the positions attacked, and the length of time, from daylight in the morning till night, during which the troops were engaged." The disorders which followed the battle were so great that with the exception of a single division Wellington sent the whole of the Spaniards—some 25,000—back to the Peninsula.

On the 12th the Marshal was in the entrenched camp at Bayonne, and six days later the victorious army went into cantonments, where it remained until the 9th December, when it was ordered to march towards Bayonne. It forced the passage of the Nive, and a series of engagements was fought until the 13th, on which date Hill, with one British and one Portuguese division, fought and won the battle of Saint Pierre. Wellington came up but refrained from interfering, and when he saw that his brave colleague had proved victorious, he wrung his hand in a hearty grip and exclaimed, "Hill, the day is entirely your own."

In the battles of the Nive the French lost 5800 killed and wounded, and three German regiments by desertion to the Allies, whose losses totalled 4600. Soult had now one of two alternatives, either to be hemmed in at Bayonne or to retreat. He chose the latter, and marched in the direction of Toulouse with less than 40,000 troops, Napoleon, now in desperate plight, having withdrawn 10,000 for the defence of the eastern frontier of France.

Leaving Sir John Hope to blockade Bayonne, Wellington followed Soult, who took up a position at Orthez, on the right bank of the Gave de Pau. Early on the morning of the 27th February the battle opened by Beresford turning the enemy's right, but he was driven back, as was Picton, who attacked the enemy's centre. "*Enfin je le tiens!*—At last I have him!" exclaimed Soult, but Wellington changed his plan, and at once sent Hill to cross the river by the ford above Souars and cut off the Marshal's retreat by the great road to Pau. At the same time he ordered two divisions against the right of the enemy's centre, and Colborne cut off the division



## 196      The Story of Wellington

which had checkmated Beresford. The French under Reille were driven from the heights, and at first retired, in good order, but Cotton and Lord Edward Somerset charged and spread considerable confusion in the ranks, while Hill marched on Aire and attacked Clausel. The Portuguese were repulsed, but the British drove the enemy from the town with great loss.

Wellington was wounded almost at the end of the battle, which is perhaps one reason why the pursuit was not so rapid as it might otherwise have been. However, Beresford was sent with two divisions to Bordeaux, whose citizens bade them enter, and thereupon proclaimed the Duc d'Angoulême, eldest nephew of Louis XVIII, who was now with the British army, as Prince Regent.

The last battle of the Peninsular War was fought on Easter Sunday, the 10th April 1814, at Toulouse, on which Soult's army had concentrated.

A mistake on the part of an engineer as to the breadth of the Garonne above Toulouse prevented Wellington from crossing at the spot he had selected because there were not sufficient pontoons. This caused considerable delay and a march to a narrower but more difficult place below the town. Sir George Napier says that he never saw the Commander-in-Chief in such a rage—he was “furious.” On the completion of the gangway, Beresford, with a portion of the army, passed over, drove in the French outposts, and remained in front of the enemy. There they stopped for three days, cut off from the main force and liable to attack any moment. This unexpected situation was brought about by a storm which flooded the river and swept away the pontoons.

Soult is stated to have given this reason for failing to assail Beresford's force: “You do not know what stuff two British divisions are made of; they would not be conquered as long as there was a man of them left to stand, and I cannot afford to lose men now.”

When the new bridge was available no time was lost



## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 197

in crossing the river, and on the 10th Soult was attacked. An eye-witness thus records the event<sup>1</sup>:

“The 4th, 6th, and a Portuguese division under Marshal Beresford’s orders, attacked the great fort on the right of the French, and here was the brunt of the battle, for the enemy was strongly posted and flanked by works, with trenches in their front, and their best troops opposed to ours. But nothing could damp the courage of this column; the enemy’s guns poured a torrent of fire upon it; still it moved onward, when column upon column appeared, crowning the hill and forming lines in front and on the flanks of our brave fellows who were near the top; and then such a roll of musketry accompanied by peals of cannon and the shouts of the enemy commenced, that our soldiers were fairly forced to give way and were driven down again. This attack was twice renewed, and twice were our gallant fellows forced to retire, when, being got into order again and under a tremendous fire of all arms from the enemy, they once more marched onward determined ‘*to do or die*’ (for they were nearly all Scotch) and, having gained the summit of the position, they charged with the bayonet, and in spite of every effort of the enemy, drove all before them and entered every redoubt and fort with such a courage as I never saw before. The enemy lay in *heaps*, dead and dying! few, very few, escaped the slaughter of that day; but ‘victory’ was heard shouted from post to post as that gallant band moved along the crown of the enemy’s position taking every work at the point of the bayonet.

“While the work of death was going on here, the centre of the French position was attacked by the Spanish column of 8000 men, under General Freyre, who had *demandé* in rather a haughty tone that Lord Wellington should give the Spaniards the post of honour in the battle. He acceded, but took special care to have the Light Division in reserve to support them in case of

<sup>1</sup> General Sir George T. Napier, pp. 255-260.

## 198      The Story of Wellington

*accidents.* Old Freyre placed himself at the head of his column, surrounded by his staff, and marched boldly up the hollow way, or road, which led right up to the enemy, under a heavy and destructive fire of cannon shot, which plunging into the head of his column made great havoc among his men ; still they went steadily and boldly on, to my astonishment and delight to see them behave so gallantly, and I could not help expressing my delight to Colonel Colborne. But, alas ! he knew them too well, and said to me, ‘ Gently, my friend ; don’t praise them too soon ; look at yonder brigade of French Light Infantry, ready to attack them as soon as the head of their column enters the open ground. One moment more and we shall see the Spaniards fly ! Gallop off, you, and throw the 52nd Regiment (which was in line) into open column of companies, and let these fellows pass through, or they will carry the regiment off with them.’ He had scarcely finished the words when a well-directed fire from the French Infantry opened upon the Spanish column, and instantly the words ‘ *Vive l’Empereur ! En avant ! en avant !* ’ accompanied by a charge, put the Spaniards to flight, and down they came upon the 52nd Regiment, and I had but just time to throw it into open column of companies when they rushed through the intervals like a torrent and never stopped till they arrived at the river some miles in the rear. As soon as they had passed, and I had formed the regiment into line again, we moved up and took the Spaniards’ place, driving before us the enemy’s brigade, who, being by this time completely beaten on the right and all his forts and trenches carried by Beresford’s troops, had retreated into the town ; so that we found the fort on that part of the position which we attacked quite abandoned, and we entered it without loss.

“ On our right the 3rd Division, under General Picton, was ordered to make a false attack on the canal bridge, which was strongly fortified and formed an impracticable barrier to that part of the town ; but General Picton

## Closing Battles of Peninsular War 199

(who never hesitated at disobeying his orders) thought proper to change this false attack into a real one, and after repeated and useless attempts to carry it was forced to give it up, with an immense loss of officers and men. To our extreme right and on the opposite side of the river General Hill was stationed with his corps in order to watch the bridge and gates of the town, and either prevent any attempt of the enemy to pass over a body of troops during the action to cut off our communications with the rear, or, should he show any design of retreating that way, to impede him. However, all was quiet on that side, and now that every man of the enemy's army had been chased from the position the battle was won, and the roar of cannon, the fire of the musketry, and the shouts of the victors ceased. All was still; the pickets placed; the sentinels set; and the greatest part of the army sleeping in groups round the fires of the bivouac."

Soult had only been able to bring some 39,000 men into the field, to so great an extent had his forces been depleted, while Wellington had less than 50,000 available troops. Of the French, 3200 were killed or wounded, of the Allies 4600. On the 12th April Soult evacuated Toulouse, six days after Napoleon the Great had snatched up a pen and scrawled his formal abdication. A moment before he had been full of fight, had wanted to rally the corps of Augereau, Suchet and Soult. A year later he won back more than these. Wellington entered Toulouse on the day Soult left it, and within a few hours of the receipt of the news from Paris of the proclamation of Louis XVIII, a monarch as incompetent as the fallen Emperor was great. History is oftentimes ironic, and Time's see-saw seldom maintains an even balance for any lengthy period.

## CHAPTER XVII

# The Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign

(1814-15)

*"I work as hard as I can in every way in order to succeed."*

WELLINGTON.

**I** MARCH to-morrow to follow Marshal Soult, and to prevent his army from becoming the *noyau* of a civil war in France." Thus writes Wellington to Sir John Hope on the 16th April 1814, when the white flag of the Bourbons was flying at Toulouse, and forty-eight hours after Hope had been made a prisoner during a sortie on the part of the French garrison of Bayonne. Soult extended no right hand of welcome to Louis XVIII, and positively refused to submit to the new *régime* until he had received trustworthy information from some of Napoleon's ministers. However, he was speedily convinced of the fall of his former master, and both he and Suchet acknowledged the Provisional Government. On the 19th April a Convention was signed by each party and Wellington for the cessation of hostilities and the evacuation of Spain. The British infantry were sent either to the homeland or on foreign service; the cavalry traversed France and crossed to England from Calais.

Wellington's work was not yet over, although his military career was closed for a time. He was appointed British Ambassador at Paris, and while he wrote to a correspondent that recent political and military events



## Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign 201

promised "to restore the blessings of peace permanently to the world," we must not suppose that he believed the abdication of Napoleon to be the herald of the millennium. When Castlereagh proposed the diplomatic post to him Wellington would have been perfectly justified in declining it, but sufficient of his story has been told for the reader to appreciate the fact that the Hero of the Peninsula was as keenly devoted to the service of his king and country as the Hero of Trafalgar. Whatever egotism he possessed was certainly not carried to excess. He says that he should never have thought himself qualified for the work. "I hope, however," he adds, and here the sterling qualities of the man are revealed, "that the Prince Regent, his Government, and your Lordship, are convinced that I am ready to serve him in any situation in which it may be thought that I can be of any service. Although I have been so long absent from England, I should have remained as much longer if it had been necessary; and I feel no objection to another absence in the public service, if it be necessary or desirable." He says much the same thing to his brother Henry: "I must serve the public in some manner or other; and, as under existing circumstances I could not well do so at home, I must do so abroad."

Those who accuse Wellington of lack of heart will do well to remember that before leaving Toulouse for Paris he wrote an appealing letter to Earl Bathurst in behalf of Sir Rowland Hill and Sir Robert Kennedy, the latter of whom had exerted himself to the utmost in keeping the army well supplied with provisions, and to write a letter of condolence to Hope, who was a prisoner and wounded.

But he found time to join in a few *fêtes* in honour of the Restoration, including a magnificent ball given by Sir Charles Stewart, the British Commissioner to the Army of the Allies, where monarchs were plentiful and Society beauties abundant. "It was in the midst of this ball," the Comtesse de Boigne relates, "that the Duke of

## 202      The Story of Wellington

Wellington appeared for the first time in Paris. I can see him now entering the room with his two nieces, Lady Burgers<sup>1</sup> and Miss Pole, hanging on his arms. There were no eyes for any one else, and at this ball, where grandeur abounded, everything gave way to military glory. That of the Duke of Wellington was brilliant and unalloyed, and a lustre was added to it by the interest that had long been felt in the cause of the Spanish nation."

He had only been in Paris six days before he set out for Madrid, *via* Toulouse, "in order to try whether I cannot prevail upon all parties to be more moderate, and to adopt a constitution more likely to be practicable and to contribute to the peace and happiness of the nation." He had made the proposal, and the Allies had eagerly accepted it. When he started on his journey he was the Duke of Wellington,<sup>2</sup> and it was additional cause of satisfaction to him to know that peerages had been conferred on Beresford, Hill, Cotton, Hope, and Graham, "my gallant coadjutors." He stayed at Toulouse for a couple of days, attending to details connected with the army, and again continued his journey, writing dispatches, notes of condolence, a letter requesting permission to accept the Grand Cross of the Order of St George from the Czar, and so on.

Napoleon had released Ferdinand VII on the 13th of the previous March, and the king was now back in his capital. "I entertain a very favourable opinion of the King from what I have seen of him," Wellington writes from Madrid on the 25th May 1814, "but not of his Ministers." This opinion of Ferdinand must be taken as referring to the man and not to his methods, for he had already assumed the part of a despot to so alarming an extent that civil war was feared, hence the Duke's journey. "I have accomplished my object in coming here"; he says in the same letter, "that is, I think there

<sup>1</sup> Lady Burghersh.

<sup>2</sup> Parliament also granted to him the sum of £400,000.

## Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign 203

will certainly be no civil war at present." But seven days later he communicates with Castlereagh in a minor key: "I have been well received by the King and his Ministers; but I fear that I have done but little good."

He left a lengthy memorandum in the hands of his Catholic Majesty, full of excellent advice, and bereft, as he said, of "all national partialities and prejudices." Commerce, the colonies, domestic interests, and finance are all touched upon in a sane, straightforward way, obviously with the intention of promoting "a good understanding and cementing the alliance with Great Britain," but valuable quite apart from any motive that might be construed as selfish. As Wellington says in the preamble, "The Spanish nation having been engaged for six years in one of the most terrible and disastrous contests by which any nation was ever afflicted, its territory having been entirely occupied by the enemy, the country torn to pieces by internal divisions, its ancient constitution having been destroyed, and vain attempts made to establish a new one; its marine, its commerce, and revenue entirely annihilated; its colonies in a state of rebellion, and nearly lost to the mother country; it becomes a question for serious consideration, what line of policy should be adopted by His Majesty upon his happy restoration to his throne and authority." Had Ferdinand taken Wellington's well-intentioned advice to heart, Spain might have risen from her ashes. The old abuses cropped up, the Inquisition was re-established in a milder form, and troops were sent across the seas to perish in a futile endeavour to recover the Transatlantic colonies of a once glorious empire.

After returning to Paris to make arrangements for the embarkation of the British cavalry at Calais, the Duke sailed for England. When he landed at Dover on the 23rd June 1814, a salute from the batteries of the Castle welcomed him home. "About five o'clock this morning," says a contemporary writer, "his majesty's sloop-of-war, the *Rosario*, arrived in the roads, and fired a salute.



## 204      The Story of Wellington

Shortly afterwards, the yards of the different vessels of war were manned ; a salute took place throughout the squadron, and the launch of the *Nymphen* frigate was seen advancing towards the harbour, with the Duke of Wellington ; at this time the guns upon the heights and from the batteries commenced their thunder upon the boat leaving the ship ; and on passing the pier-heads his Lordship was greeted with three distinct rounds of cheers from those assembled ; but upon his landing at the Cross-wall, nothing could exceed the rapture with which his Lordship was received by at least ten thousand persons ; and notwithstanding it was so early, parties continued to arrive from town and country every minute. The instant his Lordship set foot on shore, a proposition was made, and instantly adopted, to carry him to the Ship Inn : he was borne on the shoulders of our townsmen, amidst the reiterated cheers of the populace."

London went wild with excitement when he arrived, and at Westminster Bridge the mob took the horses from his carriage and dragged it along in triumph. On the 28th he took his seat for the first time in the House of Lords. He must have appeared a fine figure as, clad in his Field Marshal's uniform under a peer's robes, he was introduced by the Dukes of Beaufort and Richmond. The Lord Chancellor expressed the sentiments of the House, but refrained from attempting to state the "eminent merits" of his military character, "to represent those brilliant actions, those illustrious achievements, which have attached immortality to the name of Wellington, and which have given to this country a degree of glory unexampled in the annals of this kingdom. In thus acting, I believe I best consult the feelings which evince your Grace's title to the character of a truly great and illustrious man"; and the Duke replied, in a short speech, attributing his success to his troops and general officers. A little later a deputation from the Lower House waited upon Wellington to offer him the congratulations of the Commons, and he attended in person



## Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign 205

to return thanks. The whole House rose as he entered. After a short speech the Speaker made an eloquent and touching address.

“It is not . . . the grandeur of military success,” he said, “which has alone fixed our admiration or commanded our applause; it has been that generous and lofty spirit which inspired your troops with unbounded confidence, and taught them to know that the day of battle was always a day of victory; that moral courage and enduring fortitude which, in perilous times, when gloom and doubt had beset ordinary minds, stood nevertheless unshaken; and that ascendancy of character which, uniting the energies of jealous and rival nations, enabled you to wield at will the fate and fortunes of mighty empires. . . .

“It now remains only that we congratulate your Grace upon the high and important mission on which you are about to proceed, and we doubt not that the same splendid talents, so conspicuous in war, will maintain, with equal authority, firmness, and temper, our national honour and interests in peace.”

Wellington was made a Doctor of Laws by the University of Oxford, as Nelson had been before him,<sup>1</sup> he received the freedom of the City of London in a gold casket, and a magnificent sword—in a word, he was the country's Hero.

The time at his disposal was short and fully occupied, for he left London on the 8th August for Paris, travelling by way of the Netherlands, where he inspected the frontier from Liège along the Meuse and the Sambre to Namur and Charleroi, and thence by Mons to Tournay and the sea with a view to determining how Holland and Belgium, now united into one kingdom, could be placed in an adequate state of defence for future service should circumstances dictate. He also noted some of the most advantageous positions, including “the entrance of the *forêt de Soignes* by the high road which leads to Brussels

<sup>1</sup> See the author's “Story of Nelson,” p. 195.

## 206      The Story of Wellington

from Binch, Charleroi, and Namur,"—in one word, Waterloo. He realized that there were more disadvantages than advantages, but "this country must be defended in the best manner that is possible," even though it "affords no features upon which reliance can be placed to establish any defensive system."<sup>1</sup>

Wellington had no hours of luxurious ease in Paris. The abolition of the slave trade, on which Great Britain had at last determined, occupied much of his attention, and one has only to refer to his dispatches at this period to understand the many difficulties he had to contend with in this one particular. Then there were questions of compensation for private property destroyed or damaged in the late war to be considered, of American vessels of war and privateers fitted out in French ports, and what was most important of all, a diagnosis of the increasing restlessness in Paris to be made. He believed that the sentiments of the people were favourable to the Bourbon king, "but the danger is not in that quarter, but among the discontented officers of the army, and others, heretofore in the civil departments of the service, now without employment."

It would be incorrect to state that Wellington was popular in Paris, for not a few prominent military men regarded the presence of the General who had played no small part in tarnishing the glory of France as a perpetual reminder of the country's misfortunes. The people even went so far as to resent his coat of arms, in which there was a lion or leopard bearing a tricoloured flag. This was construed as the British lion trampling on the French national flag. There was an eagle on the Duchess's arms, which was another cause of offence. "My coach was in danger of being torn to pieces," says the Duke, and he was obliged to have the innocent bird painted out.

The Congress of Vienna was now sitting, bent on un-

<sup>1</sup> The complete Memorandum will be found in Gurwood, vol. xii., pp. 125-9.

## Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign 207

doing the work of the Revolution so far as was possible with a view to upholding the Divine right of kings. This is not to be wondered at considering the members of the solemn conclave, which included the Czar, the Kings of Prussia, Bavaria, Denmark and Würtemberg, the Grand Duke Charles of Baden, the Elector William of Hesse, the Hereditary Grand Duke George of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Duke of Weimar, and Prince Eugene Beauharnais (Napoleon's step-son). The President was Metternich, the Emperor of Austria's right-hand man, the first representative of France was the wily Talleyrand, of Great Britain Castlereagh. A host of plenipotentiaries came to put their fingers into the political pie, including those of Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, France, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, Switzerland, Italy, the Pope, the Netherlands, and the smaller German States.

What with talk of projected attempts on his life and the far from pacific doings at Vienna, the Earl of Liverpool was of opinion that it would be advisable to get Wellington out of France as soon as possible. With this idea in view he was offered the command of the troops in North America, an offer he bitterly resented. However, Castlereagh solved the difficulty by asking the Duke to take his place at Vienna. The proposition was made by the Foreign Secretary in a letter dated the 18th December 1814. "I do not hesitate to comply with your desire," the Duke replies. "As I mean to serve the King's Government in any situation which may be thought desirable, it is a matter of indifference to me in what stage I find your proceedings."

When Wellington reached the Austrian capital in January 1815—destined to be the greatest year in modern European history—he found that the wolves in sheep's clothing had almost concluded their deliberations. Russia, supported by Prussia, was intent upon securing Poland, a plan bitterly opposed by Great Britain and Austria. France was wishful for Holland and Belgium. The quarrelling suddenly ceased when, on the 7th March,



## 208      The Story of Wellington

Metternich received the most astounding news. Napoleon, King of Elba, had left his little island state, landed on the French coast, and was marching in the direction of Paris ! Wellington heard on the same day from another source, and immediately communicated the scanty news detailed to him by Lord Burghersh to the Emperor of Austria and the Czar.

“I do not entertain the smallest doubt that, if unfortunately it should be possible for Buonaparte to hold at all against the King of France, he must fall under the cordially united efforts of the Sovereigns of Europe.” Thus writes the Duke to Castlereagh, but in a dispatch of the same date, namely the 12th March, he shows that he entirely failed to appreciate the fascination still exercised by the name “Napoleon.” “It is my opinion,” he writes, “that Buonaparte has acted upon false or no information, and that the King will destroy him without difficulty, and in a short time.” We know that the ex-Emperor’s reception was at first somewhat lukewarm, but as he marched towards the capital it assumed the form of a triumphal procession, with Ney and the 6000 men who were “to bring him back in an iron cage” as enthusiastic followers. The inhabitants of the south alone refused to recognize the former Emperor of the French.

Far from Louis XVIII destroying Napoleon “without difficulty,” that brave monarch left France to its own devices on the 19th March, the day before his predecessor and successor reached the Tuileries. “What did he do in the midst of the general consternation of Paris ?” asks the Baron de Frénilly. “He acted. A great crowd saw him in the morning proceeding in pomp with Monsieur to the Chamber of Deputies ; he was seen to enter and throw himself into his brother’s arms, with the solemn promise to remain in Paris and be buried under the ruins of the monarchy ; and on the following day the population learnt that he had fled in the night by the road to Flanders !” Soult, now Minister of War,



## Prelude to the Waterloo Campaign 209

apparently under the impression that an Army Order would tend to dispel any affection the soldiers might feel towards their former Head, issued the most stupid of nonsensical proclamations. "Bonaparte," it reads in part, "mistakes us so far as to believe that we are capable of abandoning a legitimate and beloved sovereign in order to share the fortunes of one who is nothing more than an adventurer. He believes this—the idiot!—and his last act of folly is a convincing proof that he does so."

Without loss of time the Fifth Coalition was formed, Great Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia entering into a treaty on the 17th March, whereby each of them guaranteed to put 150,000 men in the field against "the enemy and disturber of the peace of the world," Great Britain, as usual, financing the Allies, this time to the enormous extent of £5,000,000.

With commendable dispatch Napoleon formed a new ministry and began to marshal his troops, which at first numbered 200,000 and eventually 284,000, excluding a quarter of a million of men for internal defence. "It was the finest army," writes Professor Oman, "that Napoleon had commanded since Friedland, for it was purely French, and was composed almost entirely of veterans; but it was too small for its purpose."<sup>1</sup> Murat, king of Naples, precipitated matters by invading the Papal States, and failed at the hands of Austria, thereby robbing his brother-in-law of his only possible ally. But this was finished by the beginning of May, over a month before Napoleon started for the front, leaving 10,000 of his none-too-numerous troops to quell an outburst of royalist enthusiasm in La Vendée, ever the most warlike province of France and apt to flame into insurrection on the slightest provocation.

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix. p. 619.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Ligny and Quatre Bras

(1815)

*"I go to measure myself with Wellington."*

NAPOLEON.

NAPOLEON left Paris at dawn on the 12th June, and travelled to Laon. His troops were divided into the Army of the North, intended for the invasion of Belgium, which totalled a little over 124,000 ; the Army of the Rhine, commanded by Rapp, about 20,000, with a reserve of 3000 National Guards ; Le Courbe's corps of observation, watching the passes of the Jura, about 8000 ; the Army of the Alps, with Suchet, some 23,000 ; a detachment, under Brune, guarding the line of the Var, 6000 ; the 7th Corps, watching the line of the Pyrenees, 14,000, in two sections under Decaen and Clausel. The Army of the North was distributed at Lille, Valenciennes, Mézières, Thionville, and Soissons, under D'Erlon, Reille, Vandamme, Gérard and Lobau respectively ; the Imperial Guard near Paris, and the Reserve Cavalry, under Grouchy, between the Aisne and the Sambre.<sup>1</sup> Soult was chief of the staff, an appointment not particularly happy.<sup>2</sup>

In Belgium there was the nucleus of an army, consisting

<sup>1</sup> "The Campaign of 1815, chiefly in Flanders," by Lieut.-Colonel W. H. James, P.S.C., pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix. p. 625. See also "The Life of Napoleon I," by J. Holland Rose, Litt.D., vol. ii. p. 455.

of some 10,000 soldiers, mostly British. Wellington arrived at Brussels on the 5th April, with the formidable task in hand of organizing a substantial body to oppose the returned Exile. He managed it, but the result was almost as motley a crowd of fighting men as Napoleon had for his disastrous Russian campaign. Wellington bluntly called them "not only the worst troops, but the worst-equipped army, with the worst staff that was ever brought together." There were Hanoverians, Belgians, Dutch, Brunswickers, and Nassauers, as well as men of his own country. The 1st Corps, under the Prince of Orange, totalled 25,000, with headquarters at Braine-le-Comte; the 2nd Corps, commanded by Lord Hill, numbered 24,000, with headquarters at Ath; the Reserve Corps, with the Duke at Brussels, 21,000; the Cavalry, under the Earl of Uxbridge, 14,000; in the garrisons were 12,000, and the artillery and engineers reached 10,000—grand total 106,000.<sup>1</sup> The Prussian Army, commanded by Blücher, reached 124,000 men, some few thousands of whom were already in Belgium in March. It was made up of four corps stationed at Charleroi, Namur, Ciney, and Liège, with headquarters at Namur. Both armies were in touch with each other, although distributed over a large extent of territory. It was intended that 750,000 men should be available for the invasion of France, but none of the other allies was ready. Napoleon acted promptly, his idea being to deal with each separately and drive them back on their bases before they were able to concentrate. He would then turn on the Austrians before the Russians were ready.

Napoleon succeeded in concentrating the Army of the North without definite particulars of his movements reaching either Wellington or Blücher. On the 15th June he was across the frontier and had made a preliminary success by driving Ziethen, who commanded Blücher's first corps, from the banks of the Sambre,

<sup>1</sup> James, p. 27.

## 212      The Story of Wellington

gaining the bridges, and securing Charleroi. The Emperor followed the Prussians to within a short distance of Gilly, where the French right wing defeated them with the loss of nearly 2000 men. The enemy then fell back in the direction of Ligny, and Napoleon made his headquarters at Charleroi. Meanwhile Ney, who had only arrived in the afternoon, was given charge of Reille's and D'Erlon's corps, and it is usually contended that he had told Lefebvre-Desnoëttes to reconnoitre towards Quatre Bras, then held by some 4500 Nassau troops, commanded by Prince Bernard of Saxe-Weimar.

Lefebvre first encountered the enemy at the village of Frasnes, some twenty-three miles from Brussels and covering Quatre Bras, where about 1500 men were stationed, who fell back towards Quatre Bras. The French General occupied the village in the evening after an indecisive action.

When information reached Wellington from Ziethen, vague because it was dispatched early in the morning, he ordered the majority of the troops at his disposal to be "ready to move at the shortest notice," and a few only were told to change the positions they then occupied. He issued his final instructions at 10 p.m., and then went to the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond, who had invited some of the non-commissioned officers and privates in order "to show her Bruxelles friends the *real Highland dance*," as Wellington afterwards averred. The Commander-in-Chief was quite easy in his mind, for he had done all that it was possible for him to do, and his appearance at such a festivity tended to allay the anxiety of the inhabitants as to Napoleon's movements. Surely the capital was safe if Wellington was so unconcerned as to go to a dance?

*There was a sound of Revelry by night ;  
And Belgium's Capital had gather'd then  
Her Beauty and her Chivalry ; and bright  
The lamps shone o'er fair women, and brave men :*



*A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when  
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again ;  
And all went merry as a marriage-bell :  
But Hush ! Hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell !*

*Did ye not hear it ? No : 'twas but the wind ;  
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street :  
On with the dance ! let Joy be unconfined ;  
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet  
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet :  
But, Hark ! that heavy sound breaks in once more ;  
As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;  
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !  
Arm ! Arm ! it is ; it is ; the Cannon's opening Roar !*

Had Byron pictured the entry of Lieutenant Webster with a dispatch for the Prince of Orange he would have been more literally, if not artistically, correct. The nineteen words which the Prince read were momentous: "Captain Baron von Gagern has just arrived from Nivelles, reporting that the enemy had pushed up to Quatre Bras." It had been written at Braine-le-Comte at 10.30 p.m. No further instructions were issued by Wellington, for he had already arranged "for a movement tending to draw the right of his forces in towards the left."<sup>1</sup> He therefore remained at the ball until about 2 a.m., on the 16th, and then went to bed.

He left the city very early and arrived at Quatre Bras about 10 o'clock. There he found, according to his own statement,<sup>2</sup> "the Prince of Orange with a small body of Belgian troops, two or three battalions of infantry, a squadron of Belgian dragoons, and two or three pieces of cannon which had been at the Quatre Bras—the four roads—since the preceding evening. It appeared that the picket of this detachment had been touched by a French patrol, and there was some firing, but very little ; and of so little importance that, after seeing what was doing, I went on to the Prussian army, which I saw from the ground, was assembling upon

<sup>1</sup> James, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Croker, vol. iii. p. 173.

## 214 The Story of Wellington

the field of St Amand and Ligny, about eight miles distant.

“ I reached the Prussian army ; was at their headquarters ; stayed there a considerable time ; saw the army formed ; the commencement of the battle ; and returned to join my own army assembled and assembling at the Quatre Bras. I arrived then at Quatre Bras a second time on that day, as well as I recollect, at about two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

“ The straggling fire there had continued from morning ; the Prince of Orange was with the line troops still in the same position. I was informed that the army was collecting in a wood in front. I rode forward and reconnoitred or examined their position according to my usual practice. I saw clearly a very large body of men assembled, and a Maréchal reviewing them, according to their usual practice, preparatory to an attack. I heard distinctly the usual cries : ‘ *En avant ! en avant ! L'Empereur récompensera celui qui s'avancera !* ’

“ Before I quitted the Prince of Orange, some of the officers standing about had doubted whether we should be attacked at this point. I sent to the Prince of Orange from the ground on which I was standing, to tell him that he might rely upon it that we should be attacked in five minutes, and that he had better order the retreat towards the main position of the light troops and guns which were in front, and which could make no resistance to the fierce attack about to be made upon us. These were accordingly withdrawn, and in less than five minutes we were attacked by the whole French army under Maréchal Ney. There was in fact no delay nor cessation from attack from that time till night. The reserves of the British army from Brussels had arrived at the Quatre Bras at this time ; and the corps of Brunswick troops from the headquarters, and a division of Belgian troops from Nivelles, Braine, &c.”

Ney did not begin his attack until 2 p.m. He had only Reille's corps at his disposal, and he was uncertain as to

the movements of the Prussians. But when a move was made against the farm of Gémioncourt,<sup>1</sup> the key of the position, the 7000 troops of the Prince of Orange were speedily driven back, and the wood of Bossu also fell into the enemy's hands. It was at this precise moment that Wellington and reinforcements arrived. Picton with his brave 5th Division, although exhausted by a long march on a sultry day, were ordered to retake the wood. It was then that Ney hurled his cavalry at them in a determined endeavour to save the situation at all costs.

"One regiment," we are told, "after sustaining a furious cannonade, was suddenly, and on three different sides, assailed by cavalry. Two faces of the square were charged by the lancers, while the cuirassiers galloped down upon another. It was a trying moment. There was a death-like silence, and one voice alone, calm and clear, was heard. It was their Colonel's, who called upon them to be 'steady.' On came the enemy—the earth shook beneath the horses' feet; while on every side of the devoted band, the corn,<sup>2</sup> bending beneath the rush of cavalry, disclosed their numerous assailants. The lance-blades approached the bayonets of the kneeling front rank—the cuirassiers were within forty paces—yet not a trigger was drawn. But when the word 'Fire!' thundered from the colonel's lips, each piece poured out its deadly volley, and in a moment the leading files of the French lay before the square, as if hurled by a thunderbolt to the earth. The assailants, broken and dispersed, galloped off for shelter to the tall rye; while a stream of musketry from the British square carried death into the retreating squadrons." At length Maitland's division of the Guards secured possession of the wood. The French continued to attack with ardour, but with the close of day Ney fell back upon the road to Frasnès. The British remained at Quatre Bras.

Many brave incidents are recorded. A soldier of the

<sup>1</sup> This interesting relic still exists.

<sup>2</sup> Rye.



## 216      The Story of Wellington

92nd was wounded in the thigh. After having been attended by a surgeon the medical man dismissed him by saying, "There is now no fear of you, get slowly behind." His reply, unpremeditated and instant, was, "The presence of every man is necessary," and calmly went back to his post, from which he never returned. Another fellow had his knapsack carried away from his shoulders by a cannon-ball. He caught it by a dexterous movement before it reached the ground. Wellington happened to be near, and the incident afforded him considerable amusement.

The 2nd Battalion of the 69th Regiment of Foot <sup>1</sup> had its flag captured, the precious symbol being wrenched from the hands of the officer almost at the same time as the attempted capture of another colour during a charge of French cuirassiers. The latter was preserved, although the bearer received severe wounds. Ensign Christie also saved a flag by throwing himself upon it. As the soldier lay on the ground a portion of the colour was torn off by the lancer who had made the attempt, but before the prize could be taken the captor was shot and the piece recovered.

Wellington lost 4600 killed and wounded at Quatre Bras, but although he remained in possession of the field, Ney's grim determination had precluded him from sending reinforcements to Blücher, who had been contesting Napoleon at Ligny, eight miles distant. On the other hand, the Emperor had ordered his Marshal to assist him at Ligny after having dispersed the troops at Quatre Bras, which he was far too heavily engaged all day to do, although it is conceivable that had he begun his attack earlier he might have carried out his Chief's instructions. Napoleon himself delayed his attack because some of his soldiers had not arrived, and when he was ready to open fire he totalled 20,000 men less than the Prussian commander. D'Erlon's troops, forming Ney's reserve, were sent for, but before they were pressed into service were

<sup>1</sup> Disbanded in 1816.



ordered back by Ney to assist him. Had D'Erlon remained, Napoleon would have won a decisive victory. As it was, Blücher's losses reached over 20,000, and he narrowly averted capture. He was thrown during a cavalry charge and badly injured. The Prussians abandoned the field, retiring towards Wavre, which enabled them to be in touch with Wellington, and where they later formed a junction with the fresh corps of Bülow. Napoleon, who had 11,000 men killed or wounded, was convinced that the enemy would fall back on Namur and Liége, which would enable him to deal with Wellington alone on the morrow.

Napoleon was unusually lethargic on the following day, and squandered much precious time until noon in various useless ways. He then ordered Grouchy, with 33,000 men, to ascertain the position occupied by the Prussians, while he joined Ney. Wellington, hearing of Blücher's defeat and realizing that every moment was of value, had evacuated Quatre Bras almost without interference, although Napoleon's cavalry came up with the British rear and the situation was saved by a propitious downpour of rain which soon transformed road and field alike into a quagmire. Still, Napoleon chased in pursuit to the ridge of Waterloo, where a heavy cannonade put an end to his advance. The Emperor made his headquarters at the Caillou farm, retiring to rest only after he had seen that Wellington's army was not retreating from the position it had taken up at Mont St Jean. Unable to sleep, he again satisfied himself that the army he was bent on shattering had not stolen a march on him, and when the 18th June dawned he was still gazing in the direction of Wellington and his men.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Waterloo

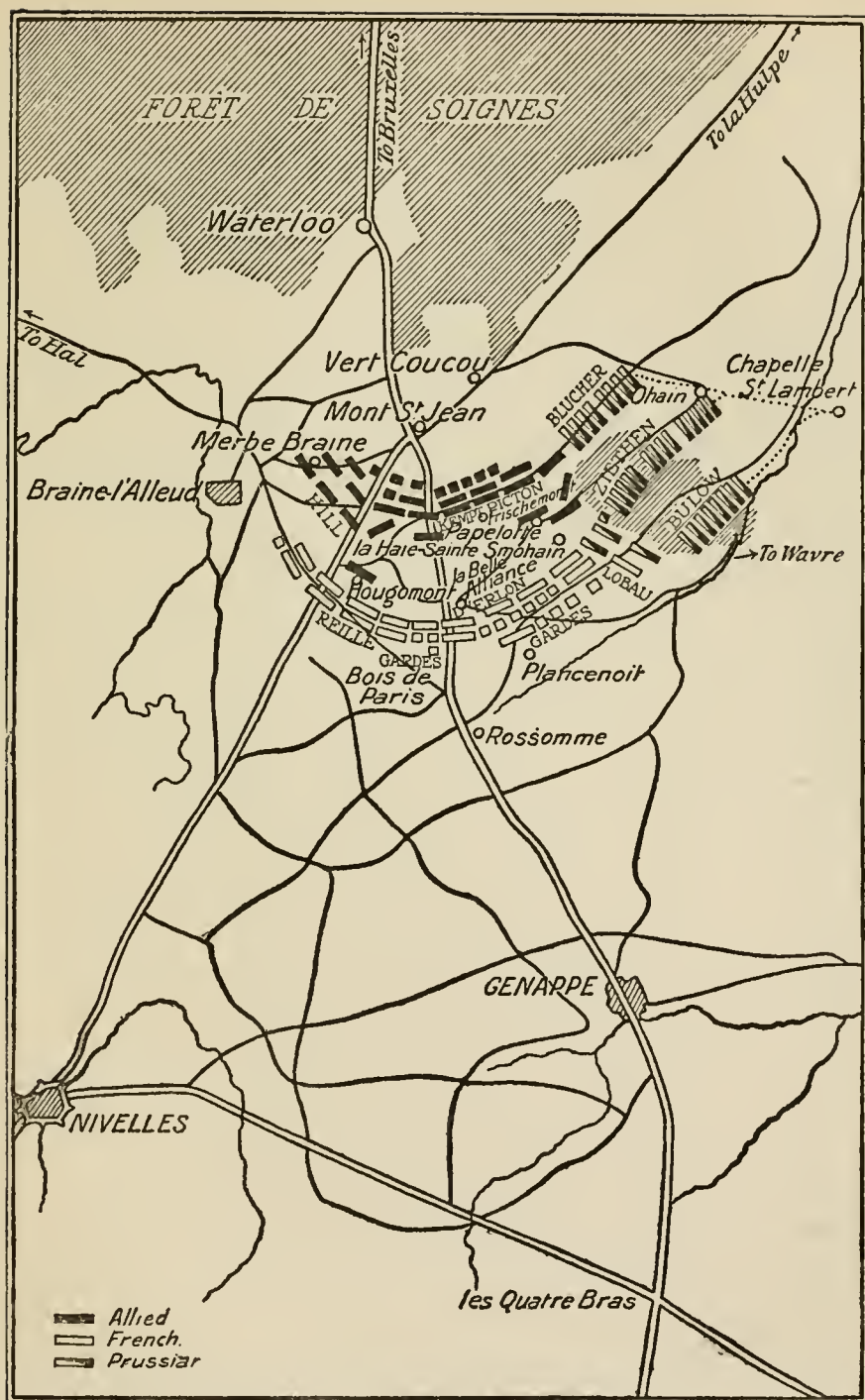
(1815)

*“ The history of a battle is not unlike the history of a ball. Some individuals may recollect all the little events of which the great result is the battle lost or won ; but no individual can recollect the order in which, or the exact moment at which they occurred, which makes all the difference as to their value or importance.”*

WELLINGTON.

THE British General had already sent word to Blücher that he was prepared to fight Napoleon if the Prussian Commander could see his way to send him one army-corps, the assistance of which he deemed imperative. He did not receive a reply until the early hours of the 18th, and it was in the affirmative. He promised Bülow's corps, which would march at daybreak against Napoleon's right, followed by that of Pirch. Those of Thielmann and Ziethen would also be sent provided the presence of Grouchy did not prevent. As events turned out, Thielmann's corps was sufficient for this purpose of defending the Dyle against the French Marshal. The first report from Grouchy received by Napoleon on the 18th was sent from Gembloux, and contained news up to 10 o'clock on the previous night, namely, that part of the Prussians had retired towards Wavre, that Blücher with their centre had fallen back on Perwez, and a column with artillery had moved in the direction of Namur.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rose's "Napoleon," vol. ii. p. 487-8.



## 220 The Story of Wellington

From another source Napoleon gathered that three bodies of the Prussians were concentrating at Wavre, vital information which, for some inexplicable reason, he did not dispatch to Grouchy until 10 a.m. We have it on the authority of Foy, who had fought in Spain, that at daybreak Napoleon was told that the junction of Wellington and Blücher was possible. This he refused to believe, stating that such an event could not take place before the 20th. Grouchy was ordered to keep up his communications with Napoleon, pushing before him "those bodies of Prussians which have taken this direction and which may have stopped at Wavre." In addition, he was to "follow those columns which have gone to your right." Dr Holland Rose pronounces these instructions as far from clear: "Grouchy was not bidden to throw all his efforts on the side of Wavre; and he was not told whether he must attack the enemy at that town, or interpose a wedge between them and Wellington, or support Napoleon's right. Now Napoleon would certainly have prescribed an immediate concentration of Grouchy's force towards the north-west for one of the last two objects, had he believed Blücher about to attempt a flank march against the chief French army. Obviously it had not yet entered his thoughts that so daring a step would be taken by a foe whom he pictured as scattered and demoralized by defeat."<sup>1</sup>

As Houssaye, one of the most painstaking of historians, says, "It is necessary to walk over the ground, to perceive its constantly undulating formation, similar to the billows of a swelling sea." I have followed his advice for the purposes of the present volume. The configuration of the land near the ridge, which was at first the right centre of the Allies, has been altered somewhat by the excavation of earth for the celebrated but unsightly Lion Mound, otherwise the field is much the same as it was in 1815. Major Cotton, who fought

<sup>1</sup> Rose's "Napoleon," vol. ii. p. 488.



at Waterloo, tells us that on the day of the battle there were "splendid crops of rye, wheat, barley, oats, beans, peas, potatoes, tares, and clover; some of these were of great height. There were a few patches of ploughed ground." Exactly the same is true now. The soil which covers the mouldering bones of many a hero yields a mighty harvest. Practically every inch of it is either pasture or under cultivation.

By far the most interesting point is the château and farm-house of Hougoumont. The buildings were then over two centuries old, and were erected with a view to defence, the garden being strongly walled on the south and east sides. In 1815 it was replete with orchard, outbuildings, banked-up hedges, and a chapel. Additional loop-holes were made by Wellington's orders, a scaffold was erected so that the troops could discharge their muskets over the wall, and the flooring over the south gateway hastily taken up "to enable our men to fire down upon the enemy should they force the gate which had been blocked up." This strong strategic position before the right flank of the allied line was admirably defended by the light companies of the second battalions of Coldstream and Foot Guards.

The battle began with a protracted but successful attack by Napoleon's brother, Jerome, on the Nassauer and Hanoverian troops, which held the wood in front of the château. Proud of his triumph, and contrary to the Emperor's orders, three attempts to assault the grim building were made and failed. At length Napoleon made up his mind to bombard Hougoumont, which he did to some effect, the chapel and barn blazing fiercely, but its brave defenders never surrendered. Four days after the battle, Major W. E. Frye visited the spot. "At Hougoumont," he says, "where there is an orchard, every tree is pierced with bullets. The barns are all burned down, and in the courtyard it is said they have been obliged to burn upwards of a thousand carcasses, an awful holocaust to the War-Demon."

## 222      The Story of Wellington

On one of the outside walls of the little chapel, within which many gallant soldiers breathed their last, is a bronze tablet erected in 1907, "to the memory of the brave dead by His Britannic Majesty's Brigade of Guards and by Comte Charles van der Burch."<sup>1</sup> The sacred building has been thoroughly repaired, and the interior white-washed. The latter is to be regretted, but was incumbent owing to the vandalism of visitors whose one aim in life apparently is to carve or scrawl their names upon monuments and buildings.

Within easy distance is the farm of La Haye Sainte, still used for the purpose for which it was originally built. If the thick wall which abuts the road to the Belgian capital is not so strong as it was—and there are signs of recent repair—the most cursory examination is sufficient to prove that it offered a strong resistance. La Haye Sainte was the key of the allied position. It was Napoleon's ambition to secure it, together with the farm of Mont St Jean, so that the enemy's communications with Brussels and Blücher might be cut off. Wellington had unwisely left the defence of La Haye Sainte to a mere handful of men, 376 in all, of the King's German Legion. The buildings were attacked on all sides during the eventful day, and it was not until 6.30 p.m., or thereabouts, when ammunition was exhausted, that the place fell. Professor Oman points out that the Emperor should have sent the Guard "to the front *en masse*" the moment that happened. This he did not do, and a golden opportunity was irretrievably lost.

A little farther up the road, and on the opposite side, is a long, white-washed building known as the farm of Mont St Jean, the hamlet of that name being the centre of the position. This was the chief hospital of the Allies, and once a monastery of the Knights Templar. Near here the Iron Duke drew up the second line of his reserve, with three reserve batteries. Napoleon's

<sup>1</sup> Comte Charles van der Burch is the present owner of Hougoumont.

headquarters were on the Belle Alliance height, where he spent the greater part of the day, and where he kept the Imperial Guard, nick-named "The Immortals," in reserve until after 7 p.m. It was not until evening had given place to night that the French troops were routed.

When you enter La Belle Alliance Inn you are shown "the historical chamber of Napoleon." But let me warn visitors who admire the grotesque painting of "Wellington Meeting Blücher," which is nailed to the outside wall, against believing that this is the scene of the memorable incident. Mutual congratulations took place before La Belle Alliance was reached, the Duke turning off the high road leading to the village of Waterloo to meet the rugged old soldier when he descried him surrounded by his staff.

Within a few hundred yards of the inn is a memorial "to the last combatants of the Grand Army." It is by far the most artistic and apposite of the several monuments on the field. With shattered wings the French eagle guards the tattered standard of "The Immortals" on the ground where the last square of Napoleon's famous Guard was cut down. "It was a fatality," said the fallen Emperor of the West, "for in spite of all, I should have won that battle."

Having glanced at the chief objects of interest on the field of Waterloo, we must now turn our attention to the leading features of the fight. It is not proposed to enter into minute details, or to discuss the many vexed points which have been raised from time to time. Sir Harry Smith, who took part in the battle, issued a word of warning years ago, which we shall endeavour to bear in mind. "Every moment was a crisis," he said, "and the controversialists had better have left the discussion on the battle-field."

The morning of Sunday, the 18th June 1815, was dismal, foggy, and wet. No "Sun of Austerlitz" pierced the low clouds that scudded across the sky. The state of the weather being then, as now, a universal



## 224      The Story of Wellington

topic of conversation and record, we have abundant documentary evidence on the subject. After this uninteresting, but not unimportant, fact, our witnesses, to a large extent, break down. It would be much easier to detail what we do not know about the battle of Waterloo than to put down in black and white what may be regarded as indisputable truth. For instance, there is an amazing disparity between the times at which eye-witnesses assert the first cannon was fired. The Duke says eleven o'clock, Napoleon two hours later. Alava mentions half-past eleven, Ney one o'clock. Lord Hill, who used a stop-watch, avers with some semblance of authority, 11.50 a.m. The Emperor certainly delayed giving battle. Soult issued an order between 4 and 5 a.m. for the army to be "ready to attack at 9 a.m." At 11 o'clock Napoleon stated that the soldiers were to be "in battle array, about an hour after noon." Scores of volumes and thousands of pages have been devoted to the subject of the conflict which concluded Napoleon's military career. It seems fairly reasonable to suppose that after the lapse of one hundred years any further research, although it may throw valuable sidelights on the battle, will not solve the problem. We have the Duke's assurance that "it is impossible to say when each important occurrence took place, nor in what order." To a would-be narrator he wrote, "I recommend you to leave the battle of Waterloo as it is," to another, "the Duke entertains no hopes of ever seeing an account of all its details which shall be true," and again, "I am really disgusted with and ashamed of all that I have seen of the battle of Waterloo." That being so, it is not purposed to view it from a critical standpoint, but merely to detail the leading events of the day as these are generally accepted.

The ridge on which Napoleon posted his forces in three lines, with a reserve of 11,000 troops behind the centre, was opposite Mont St Jean, with the farm of La Belle Alliance, on the high road from Charleroi to



Brussels, in the centre. The number of troops at his immediate disposal was 74,000, and they occupied a front of about two miles. The spectacle as the French troops deployed "was magnificent," Napoleon afterwards averred, not without a touch of imagination, "and the enemy, who was so placed as to behold it down to the last man, must have been struck by it: the army must have seemed to him double in number what it really was."

Just before the conflict began there was scarcely a mile between the French and Wellington's 67,000 troops, who were posted across the high roads leading respectively from Charleroi and Nivelles to Brussels, just in front of Mont St Jean, where they cross. His right extended to Merbe Braine, and his left, which he considered was protected by the advancing Prussians, was to the westward of the high road. The army was drawn up in two lines, the second of which was composed entirely of cavalry under Lord Uxbridge. To the left Wellington held the villages of La Haye, Papelotte, and Smohain; Hougomont was before his right, La Haye Sainte in front of the centre, and all were occupied by his troops. His reserves, numbering about 17,000, were unseen by the enemy owing to the formation of the ground, and were posted behind his centre and right. At the rear was the forest of Soignes, through which he could retreat if necessary. At Hal, nine miles away, the corps of Prince Frederick of Orange and two brigades of Colville's division, some 14,000 men in all, were stationed. They took no part in the battle. Their presence at so great a distance was due to the somewhat unnecessary anxiety of Wellington, as after events proved, regarding the right flank. The Allies' guns numbered 156, those of the French 246.

Wellington displayed extraordinary activity, and commanded in person. Napoleon relied on his subordinates far more than was usual with him, and seemed to take little direct interest in the fighting. He sat in

## 226      The Story of Wellington

a chair; his antagonist rode about throughout the day. "It is hardly possible," says Lord William Lennox, one of his aides-de-camp, "to describe the calm manner in which the hero gave his orders and watched the movements and attacks of the enemy. In the midst of danger, bullets whistling close about him, round shot ploughed the ground he occupied, and men and horses falling on every side, he sat upon his favourite charger, Copenhagen, as collectedly as if he had been reviewing the Household Troops in Hyde Park."

Although it would be foolish to endeavour to accurately divide the battle in different parts as one would do a sum, for the simple reason that fighting was going on all the time and the entire armies of the combatants were not used in any given moment, there were five more or less distinct attacks made by the French which may be useful as keys, viz. : (1) the diversion against Hougoumont, which opened the battle; (2) the attack against Wellington's left-centre; (3) the cavalry attack on the right-centre; (4) a second attempt with infantry and cavalry having a similar object, and an infantry attack against the enemy's left; (5) the charge of the Imperial Guard.

The main attack was against the British left and centre, but by way of diversion an attempt was first made on the wood of Hougoumont, which was carried after so determined a resistance that Alison, the historian, afterwards counted no fewer than twenty-two shots in a tree less than six inches in diameter; fairly conclusive evidence of the death-dealing shower faced by the Nassauers and Hanoverians defending the copse and of the vigour of the enemy. The château was then attacked, contrary to orders, by Jerome Bonaparte, and brilliantly repulsed by the light companies of the second battalions of Coldstream and Foot Guards.<sup>1</sup> Several attempts were afterwards made to secure the place, and dead bodies lay piled in heaps, but those

<sup>1</sup> Now the Grenadier Guards.

within held it from the beginning to the end of the battle, although Wellington found it necessary to reinforce the men who were upholding Britain's honour so determinedly. The orchard was captured and regained, howitzers battered the stout walls, the building was set on fire, the door of the courtyard was burst open and shut in the face of the French. These deeds were performed by the fellows of whom Napoleon had spoken earlier in the day as "breakfast for us!"

It was not until about half-past one o'clock, when a black, moving mass was seen on the wooded heights of St Lambert that the Emperor really bestirred himself. Napoleon looked through his glass in the direction of the object on which nearly all eyes were strained. Some of his officers thought it a body of troops, some suggested Prussians, others Grouchy. "I think," remarked Soult, "it is five or six thousand men, probably part of Grouchy's army." In reality it was the advanced guard of Bülow's troops, and the Emperor shortly afterwards heard from the lips of a prisoner that at least 30,000 men were approaching to assist Wellington. However, some light horsemen were sent towards Frischermont to observe the Prussians,<sup>1</sup> and a postscript was added to a dispatch already penned to Grouchy, begging him to "lose not an instant in drawing near and joining us, in order to crush Bülow, whom you will catch in the very act."

Without delay Napoleon launched D'Erlon's corps in four columns totalling nearly 20,000 men against the enemy's left-centre, Ney in command. They were supported by far too few cavalry. The Emperor's idea was to take La Haye Sainte, break through the Allied line, and gain Mont St Jean. This operation, if successful, would compel Wellington to abandon his communications with the Belgian capital and change his formation. In addition, it would place the French between his army and the Prussians. Bylandt's Dutch-

<sup>1</sup> Rose, vol. ii. p. 496.



## 228      The Story of Wellington

Belgians, who were nearest to the enemy and consequently more exposed to the covering fire of seventy-eight guns and the shots of the skirmishers, took to their heels as D'Erlon's divisions, frantically yelling "*Vive l'Empereur!*" approached the front line.<sup>1</sup> The brigades of Pack and Kempt were at once brought forward by Picton. They stood firm and poured death into the oncoming columns, receiving them, as they appeared on the crest of the ridge, with fixed bayonets.

The Earl of Uxbridge, who was in command of the cavalry, realizing that the position was still one of considerable danger, then ordered Ponsonby's Union Brigade—the 1st Royal Dragoons, Scots Greys, and Inniskillings—to charge. It burst upon the French with tremendous force and decided the issue.

Several thousands of the enemy were killed or wounded, 3000 taken prisoners, a number of guns silenced, and two eagles captured.

The story of how the colours of the French 45th Regiment were secured by Serjeant Ewart, a magnificent specimen of a man, over six feet in height, who served in the Greys, is best told in his own modest language. "It was in the charge I took the eagle from the enemy," he says; "he and I had a hard contest for it; he made a thrust at my groin, I parried it off and cut him down through the head. After this a lancer came at me; I threw the lance off by my right side, and cut him through the chin and upwards through the teeth. Next, a foot-soldier fired at me, and then charged me with his bayonet, which I also had the good luck to parry, and then I cut him down through the head; thus ended the contest. As I was about to follow my regiment, the General said, 'My brave fellow, take that to the rear; you have done enough till you get quit of it.' I took the eagle to the ridge, and afterwards to Brussels."

<sup>1</sup> "Some of this brigade, particularly the 5th Military, had behaved with great gallantry on the 16th, at Quatre Bras."—Cotton's, "*A Voice from Waterloo*," p. 56.



We have also the record of Captain Clark Kennedy, of the Royal Dragoons, regarding the capture of the eagle of the 105th Regiment. "I was," he relates, "in command of the centre squadron of the Royal Dragoons in this charge; while following up the attack, I perceived a little to my left, in the midst of a body of infantry, an eagle and colour, which the bearer was making off with towards the rear. I immediately gave the order to my squadron, 'Right shoulders forward!' at the same time leading direct upon the eagle and calling out to the men with me to secure the colour; the instant I got within reach of the officer who carried the eagle, I ran my sword into his right side, and he staggered and fell, but did not reach the ground on account of the pressure of his companions: as the officer was in the act of falling, I called out a second time to some men close behind me, 'Secure the colour, it belongs to me.' The standard coverer, Corporal Styles, and several other men rushed up, and the eagle fell across my horse's head against that of Corporal Styles's. As it was falling, I caught the fringe of the flag with my left hand, but could not at first pull up the eagle: at the second attempt, however, I succeeded. Being in the midst of French troops, I attempted to separate the eagle from the staff, to put it into the breast of my coatee, but it was too firmly fixed. Corporal Styles said, 'Sir, don't break it'; to which I replied, 'Very well; carry it off to the rear as fast as you can.' He did so."

Unfortunately the victors were too eager, and instead of returning they continued until they were in the French lines, thus enabling Napoleon to "turn the tables." His reserve squadrons robbed the British ranks of 1000 brave men, including Ponsonby. More would have fallen had not Vandeleur's Light Cavalry Brigade checked the enemy.

Picton was dead, shot at the head of his men. "When you hear of my death," the latter had previously re-

## 230      The Story of Wellington

marked to a comrade, "you will hear of a bloody day." He had "fallen gloriously at the head of his division, maintaining a position which, if it had not been kept, would have altered the fate of the day."<sup>1</sup>

The following account of the magnificent charge of Ponsonby's Union Brigade, from the pen of James Armour, Rough-rider to the Scots Greys, who took part in it, gives some idea of the work performed :

"Orders were now given that we were to prepare to charge. We gave our countrymen in front of us three hearty huzzas, and waving our swords aloft in the air, several swords were struck with balls while so doing; and I must not forget the piper—

*The piper loud and louder blew,  
The balls of all denominations quick and quicker flew.*

The Highlanders were then ordered to wheel back—I think by sections, but I am not certain: infantry words of command differ from the cavalry. When they had, and were wheeling back imperfectly, we rushed through them; at the same time they huzzaed us, calling out, '*Now, my boys—Scotland for ever!*' I must own it had a thrilling effect upon me. I am certain numbers of them were knocked over by the horses: in our anxiety we could not help it. Some said 'I didna think ye wad hae sair'd me sae'—catching hold of our legs and stirrups, as we passed, to support themselves. When we got clear through the Highlanders (92nd) we were now on the charge, and a short one it was. A cross road being in our way, we leaped the first hedge gallantly; crossed the road, and had to leap over another hedge. At this time the smoke from the firing on both sides made it so that we could not see distinctly. We had not charged far—not many yards, till we came to a column. We were pretty well together as yet, although a great number fell about that cross road. We were in the column in a very

<sup>1</sup> General Gascoigne in the House of Commons, the 29th June 1815.

short time (making pretty clean work). We still pushed forward, at least as many as could—a number had dropped off by this time—and soon came to another column. They cried out, ‘Prisoners!’ and threw down their arms, and stripped themselves of their belts (I think it is part of the French discipline to do so), and ran to our rear. Ay, they ran like hares. We still pushed on, and came upon another column; and some of them went down on their knees, calling out ‘Quarter!’ in a very supplicatory way. . . .

“We now got amongst the guns, the terrible guns, which had annoyed us so much. *Such slaughtering!*—men cut down and run through, horses houghed, harness cut, and all rendered useless. Some, who were judges of such work, reckoned we had made a very good job of it. Amongst the guns—I think six or seven in number, all brass—that I was engaged with, mostly all the men were cut down, and the horses, most of them, if not all, were houghed. While we were at work amongst these guns, never thinking but, when we were done with it, we would have nothing to do but to return from where we came; but I must own I was very much surprised, when we began to retrace our steps, when what should we behold coming away across betwixt us and our own army but a great number of these cuirassiers and lancers, the first I ever beheld in my life, who were forming up in order to cut off our retreat; but, nothing daunted, we faced them manfully. We had none to command us now, but every man did what he could. ‘Conquer or die!’ was the word. When the regiment returned from the charge mentioned, the troops that I belonged to did not muster above one or two sound men (unwounded) belonging to the front rank. Indeed the whole troop did not muster above a dozen; there were upwards of twenty of the front rank killed, and the others wounded.”

Meanwhile the farm of La Haye Sainte, held by a detachment of the German Legion under Major

## 232      The Story of Wellington

Baring, had been the object of assault by a French division detached for that purpose, and the defenders were driven from the orchard. Reinforcements were sent forward by Wellington, followed by additional cavalry by Napoleon. The cuirassiers were met by Lord Edward Somerset's Brigade, led by the Earl of Uxbridge, and driven back after a furious struggle for supremacy. Not until the last pinch of powder was spent and several determined attempts had been made to secure the place, did the brave fellows vacate their position to D'Erlon's infantry, between six and seven o'clock.

Towards the close of the afternoon Milhaud's cuirassiers, supported by light cavalry and dragoons, attacked the British right-centre. Wellington at once formed his troops in squares. When the crash came they stood firm and unbroken.

The Commander-in-Chief lost not a moment. The heavy brigade of Lord Edward Somerset was flung against the Frenchmen and drove them from the ridge.<sup>1</sup> The artillery flamed destruction. Charge followed charge, thirteen in all, but the British squares remained steady, although continually reduced. Nearly all Wellington's cavalry were pressed into service, and with the exception of a solitary Dutch-Belgian division, all his infantry reserve was employed. An officer who served in Halkett's brigade has left a vivid account of this part of the battle.

"Hougoumont and its wood," he writes, "sent up a broad flame through the dark masses of smoke that overhung the field; beneath this cloud the French were indistinctly visible. Here a waving mass of long red feathers could be seen; there, gleams as from a sheet of steel showed that the cuirassiers were moving; 400 cannon were belching forth fire and death on every side; the roaring and shouting were indistinguishably

<sup>1</sup> "Some one asked whether the French Cuirassiers had not come up very well at Waterloo? 'Yes,' he (Wellington) said, 'and they went down very well too.'"—Croker, vol. i. p. 330.



commixed—together they gave me an idea of a labouring volcano. Bodies of infantry and cavalry were pouring down on us, and it was time to leave contemplation, so I moved towards our columns, which were standing up in square. . . . As I entered the rear face of our square I had to step over a body, and looking down, recognised Harry Beere, an officer of our Grenadiers, who about an hour before shook hands with me, laughing, as I left the columns. . . . The tear was not dry on my cheek when poor Harry was no longer thought of. In a few minutes after, the enemy's cavalry galloped up and crowned the crest of our position. Our guns were abandoned,<sup>1</sup> and they formed between the two brigades, about a hundred paces in our front. Their first charge was magnificent. As soon as they quickened their trot into a gallop, the cuirassiers bent their heads so that the peaks of their helmets looked like vizors, and they seemed cased in armour from the plume to the saddle. Not a shot was fired till they were within thirty yards, when the word was given, and our men fired away at them. The effect was magical. Through the smoke we could see helmets falling, cavaliers starting from their seats with convulsive springs as they received our balls, horses plunging and rearing in the agonies of fright and pain, and crowds of the soldiery dismounted, part of the squadron in retreat, but the more daring remainder backing their horses to force them on our bayonets. Our fire soon disposed of these gentlemen. The main body re-formed in our front, and rapidly and gallantly repeated their attacks. In fact, from this time (about four o'clock) till near six, we had a constant repetition of these brave but unavailing charges. There was no difficulty in repulsing them, but our ammunition decreased alarmingly. At length an artillery wagon

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the guns were not removed, the artillerymen working them till the last moment and then seeking refuge in the nearest square, to resume their former position when the enemy began to retire.

## 234      The Story of Wellington

galloped up, emptied two or three casks of cartridges into the square, and we were all comfortable. . . .

“Though we constantly thrashed our steel-clad opponents, we found more troublesome customers in the round shot and grape, which all this time played on us with terrible effect, and fully avenged the cuirassiers. Often as the volleys created openings in our square would the cavalry dash on, but they were uniformly unsuccessful. A regiment on our right seemed sadly disconcerted, and at one moment was in considerable confusion. Halkett rode out to them, and seizing their colour, waved it over his head, and restored them to something like order, though not before his horse was shot under him. At the height of their unsteadiness we got the order to ‘right face’ to move to their assistance; some of the men mistook it for ‘right about face,’ and faced accordingly, when old Major M’Laine, 73rd, called out, ‘No, my boys, its “right face”; you’ll never hear the right about as long as a French bayonet is in front of you!’”

At Planchenoit, in the rear of the French centre, Lobau and his 10,000 men were doing their utmost to prevent Bülow with three times that number of troops from succouring Wellington. The French held the village for two hours, and then saw it fall into the hands of the enemy, but only for a time. Some of the Young Guard and three batteries of artillery had been sent by the Emperor to support Lobau, and when they arrived the scales again turned in favour of the French. While this body was held in check, Napoleon’s infantry had suffered near Hougomont, but La Haye Sainte had fallen, as already noticed. Had Napoleon sent reinforcements to Ney he might have won the battle, but he hesitated to use his remaining reserves. Before anything further was done, Wellington had made fresh dispositions, and Ziethen’s men, who had marched by way of Ohain, were on the field.

Six battalions of the Middle Guard and two battalions

of the Old Guard were at last sent forward.<sup>1</sup> As they crossed the open ground between Hougoumont and the high road the artillery played sad havoc with some of them, but behind the crest of the ridge was Maitland's brigade of the Foot Guards, led by Wellington himself. "Up, Guards, and make ready!" he shouted, and ere the first column was upon them the British infantry had dealt a deadly fire into its ranks which made it pause. The second column was caught in flank by Adam's Brigade. Then two brigades of British cavalry charged, and although the celebrated Imperial Guards endeavoured to hold their own they were forced back. Blücher, who had arrived at a most opportune moment, carried the position occupied by the French right at Papelotte and La Haye with Ziethen's corps. The whole Allied line then advanced, the heights were carried, and Napoleon's last army, on the victory of which he had staked his all, was scattered. The battle of Waterloo was won. "My plan," said the Commander-in-Chief, "was to keep my ground until the Prussians appeared, and then to attack the French position; and I executed my plan."

Throughout the night the Prussians followed up the defeated legions, which got across the Sambre on the 19th. Some 30,000 of Napoleon's men were killed or wounded, and 13,000 of the Allied army, more than half of whom were British. On the 22nd June 1815, the fallen Emperor abdicated in favour of his son; on the 7th July the Allies entered Paris in triumph, and eight days later Napoleon surrendered to Captain Maitland, of H.M.S. *Bellerophon*.

*The Desolator desolate !  
The Victor overthrown !  
The Arbiter of others' fate  
A Suppliant for his own !*

BYRON.

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix. p. 639.

## CHAPTER XX

### Wellington the Statesman

(1815-52)

*"It is the duty of all to look our difficulties in the face and to lay the ground for getting the better of them."*

WELLINGTON.

WHILE the good folk of London were listening to the guns of the Tower and of the Park, which told of the Waterloo victory, and the joyful news was percolating to the smallest hamlet, Wellington was fighting a battle in which neither sword nor gun was involved. It was one of diplomacy, and he proved the conqueror. Blücher, armed with the Declaration of the 13th March 1815 to the effect that "Napoleon Bonaparte is put beyond the pale of social and civil relations, and as enemy and disturber of the repose of the world, he is delivered over to public vengeance," was for seizing the fallen Emperor and shooting him as an outlaw at Vincennes, the scene of the Duc d'Enghien tragedy.<sup>1</sup> The bloodthirsty Prussian asked for Wellington's views on the matter. He received them without delay, and expressed in such a way that Blücher must have felt thoroughly ashamed of himself, if only for a passing moment. "They had both acted too distinguished a part in the recent transactions to become executioners," the Duke wrote. This single sentence reveals the sterling uprightness of the

<sup>1</sup> See the author's "Story of Napoleon," p. 135.



man and his hatred of unnecessary bloodshed. Even supposing that he had received authority for the carrying out of such a measure, it is extremely doubtful whether Wellington would have concurred in his colleague's wish. Blücher sneered—and accepted the decision. Wellington also found himself in disagreement with the Prussian view regarding the bridge of Jena at Paris, which commemorated the crushing Prussian defeat of October 1806. Blücher, with true patriotic zeal as it seemed to him, was for blowing it to pieces. Wellington regarded the idea as foolish, and he carried his point. It would have been a bitter day for the Capital had Blücher been allowed to work his will. The Prussian Commander insisted on levying a contribution on the city of Paris of 100,000,000 francs. Wellington upset the scheme by insisting that the question was one for the Allied sovereigns to arrange. For the third time vindictive Blücher had to give in.

When the Provisional Government appealed to the Duke with reference to Napoleon's successor, he bluntly told them that "the best security for Europe was the restoration of the King," namely, Louis XVIII, and that he should be recalled "without loss of time, so as to avoid the appearance of the measure having been forced upon them by the allies."

When the Exile King returned to Paris the enormous demands of certain of the Powers, particularly of Austria and Prussia, had to be discussed. Had it not been for the resistance of Castlereagh, Wellington, and Nesselrode, extensive partitions undoubtedly would have resulted. As finally settled by the Second Treaty of Paris, concluded on the 20th November, the territory of France was reduced to practically the limits of 1790, an indemnity of 700,000,000 francs was determined for the expenses of the war, and an army of occupation not exceeding 150,000 troops under the Duke was to garrison the chief frontier fortresses, including Valenciennes, Cambray, Quesnoy, Maubeuge, and Landrecy,

## 238      The Story of Wellington

for a maximum period of five years, the expense being met by the French Government. The magnificent art treasures, which Napoleon had gloried in plundering, were to be returned to their rightful owners. That is why the celebrated bronze horses of St Mark may be seen on the great Venetian Cathedral to-day, and the wonderful "Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, admired in the Cathedral of Antwerp, from whence it had been taken to find a temporary resting-place in the Louvre.

An excellent account of the Army of Occupation is given by a Scotsman who visited Paris shortly after the battle of Waterloo. There were comparatively few Austrians, the majority of them being in the south of France, but those seen by the writer of *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* were "bulky men" who "want the hardy and athletic look of the British, Russians, or Prussians." The Russian infantry were "fine, firm, steady-looking men, clean, handsome, but by no means remarkable for stature." The artillery were "in the highest possible order," the cavalry "remarkably fine men," the appearance of the Cossacks "prepossessing." The Prussians, while never having been accused of "gross violence," succeeded in wrecking the Château de Montmorency, where a large body of them was quartered. Camp-kettles were boiled with picture-frames, and the furniture stripped by female camp followers. Paul notes that the Prussian officers were the principal customers of the expensive restaurants and theatres, but that many British officers of rank had gone so far as to decline the quarters appointed them in private houses. He bestows much praise on Wellington for his discipline and justice: "The strong sense and firmness for which the Duke is as much distinguished as for skill in arms and bravery in the field of battle, easily saw that the high and paramount part which Britain now holds in Europe, that pre-eminence which, in so many instances, has made her

and her delegates the chosen mediators when disputes occurred amongst the allied powers, depends entirely on our maintaining pure and sacred the national character for good faith and disinterested honour. The slightest complaint, therefore, of want of discipline or oppression perpetrated by a British officer or soldier has instantly met with reprehension and punishment, and the result has been the reducing the French to the cruel situation of hating us without having any complaint to justify themselves for doing so, even in their own eyes. . . . The soldiers, without exception, both British and foreigners, conduct themselves in public with civility, are very rarely to be seen intoxicated, though the means are so much within reach ; and, considering all the irritating circumstances that exist, few quarrels occur betwixt them and the populace. Very strong precautions are, however, taken in case of any accidental or premeditated commotion."

Wellington threw the whole weight of his influence on the side of moderation. Prussia was all for partition, for getting her territorial "pound of flesh," but the calmer statesmanship of the diplomatists already mentioned, especially of Wellington, won the day. The Duke's policy is clearly outlined in his dispatch of the 11th August, which, in the opinion of Dr Holland Rose, "deserves to rank among his highest titles to fame."

Wellington states that while France has been left "in too great strength for the rest of Europe, weakened as all the powers of Europe have been by the wars in which they have been engaged with France," his objection to the demand of a "great cession from France upon this occasion is, that it will defeat the object which the Allies have held out to themselves in the present and the preceding wars." He then proceeds to detail what were, in his opinion, the various causes which led to so much bloodshed : "to put an end to the French Revolution, to obtain peace for themselves and their people, to have the power of reducing their overgrown



military establishments, and the leisure to attend to the internal concerns of their several nations, and to improve the situation of their people. The Allies took up arms against Buonaparte because it was certain that the world could not be at peace as long as he should possess, or should be in a situation to attain, supreme power in France; and care must be taken," he adds, "in making the arrangements consequent upon our success, that we do not leave the world in the same unfortunate situation respecting France that it would have been in if Buonaparte had continued in possession of his power."

The Duke then goes on to review the situation. If Louis XVIII were to refuse the cession of territory, his people would undoubtedly support him, and the Allies "might take the fortresses and provinces which might suit them, but there would be no genuine peace for the world, no nation could disarm, no Sovereign could turn his attention from the affairs of this country." If the King consented to the partition, "which, from all that one hears, is an event by no means probable, the Allies must be satisfied, and must retire; but I would appeal to the experience of the transactions of last year for a statement of the situation in which we should find ourselves." France was then reduced to her limits of 1792, and "the Allies were obliged to maintain each in the field half of the war establishment stipulated in the treaty of Chaumont, in order to guard their conquests, and what had been ceded to them." In France "the general topic of conversation was the recovery of the left bank of the Rhine as the frontier of France." Wellington therefore preferred "the temporary occupation of some of the strong places, and to maintain for a time a strong force in France, both at the expense of the French Government, and under strict regulation, to the permanent cession of even all the places which in my opinion ought to be occupied for a time. These measures will not only give



us, during the period of occupation, all the military security which could be expected from the permanent cession, but, if carried into execution in the spirit in which they are conceived, they are in themselves the bond of peace."

During the remainder of his stay in France, broken by a short visit to England in 1816, Wellington was far from popular, and one or two attempts were made on his life. It was scarcely to be expected that a man who had been pre-eminently successful in the field against the nation's armies would be lauded as a popular hero, but, as we have seen, he had helped to save the country from a bitter and vindictive humiliation. He finally returned home in 1818, when the Army of Occupation evacuated France with the consent of the Powers at the request of its Commander-in-Chief. He never again drew his sword in warfare, but he maintained a commanding position in the affairs of Great Britain until the close of his long life.

His honours and orders were now varied and many. England and foreign countries honoured themselves by honouring him. Parliament voted him £200,000 for the erection or purchase of Strathfieldsaye, Hampshire, and the estate granted to him as Prince of Waterloo by the King of the Netherlands was valued at £4000 per annum. On his return to England he became Master of the Ordnance, which entitled him to a seat in the Cabinet.

In 1821 Wellington revisited the scene of his most famous battle with George IV, and afterwards proceeded to Verona to represent, with Lord Strangford, Great Britain at the Congress about to be held there to determine the attitude of England, France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia regarding various matters, including the insurrection in Greece and the relations of Russia and Turkey in the matter, the evacuation of Piedmont and Naples by the Austrian troops, the slave trade, and more particularly the unhappy state

## 242      The Story of Wellington

of affairs in Spain, which country was then in a state of civil war. Should the five Powers send armed assistance to Ferdinand, whom Wellington's victories in the Peninsula had replaced on the throne? Answering for his own country the Duke maintained the principle of non-interference excepting in a case of necessity. In this matter Great Britain stood alone, and the Duke had to run the gauntlet of fierce criticism on his return to England.

His next continental journey was in 1826, when he was sent on a special mission to Petersburg on the accession of the Emperor Nicholas, with the object of arriving at a satisfactory settlement of the projected Russian attack on Turkey over the Greek difficulty. In this he was not entirely successful, for after events proved that he had only succeeded in staving off the evil day.

On the death of the Duke of York in the following year, Wellington was appointed Commander-in-Chief, retaining his other office, which controlled merely the artillery and engineers.

A month later Canning became Prime Minister, and the Duke was asked to continue as a member of the Cabinet. This request he not only declined, but surrendered his two important offices as well. Mutual suspicion seems to have been the cause of this unexpected event, certainly not jealousy, for Wellington said that he should be "worse than mad if he had ever thought of it for a moment," the "it" referring to his possible appointment as First Lord of the Treasury. Canning did not live long to enjoy the sweets of office, for he died on the following August, and was succeeded by "Prosperity" Robinson, otherwise Lord Goderich, who resigned at the beginning of 1828.

The Duke, once again Commander-in-Chief, was sent for by George IV, and requested to form a Ministry. He obeyed with the instinct of a soldier when ordered by his superior officer, rather than as a keen politician about to have his highest ambition gratified. Wellington

was a Tory, and the political freedom of the Roman Catholics and the reform of Parliament were the burning questions of the hour. The Duke was uncertain as to the practical utility of either, but he was not prepared to go against the known wishes of the nation so far as the religious question was concerned. After navigating a sea of difficulties, the Roman Catholic Relief Bill passed both Houses in the early days of 1829. One of his opponents, the Earl of Winchilsea, charged Wellington with "breaking in upon the Constitution of 1688 in order that he might the more effectively, under the cloak of some outward show of zeal for the Protestant religion, carry on his insidious designs for the infringement of our liberties, and the introduction of Popery in every department of the State." The Premier requested an apology, which was not forthcoming, whereupon the former demanded "satisfaction," in other words, a duel. Sir Henry Hardinge for Wellington and Lord Falmouth for Winchilsea were the respective seconds.

The meeting took place in Battersea Fields.<sup>1</sup> "Now then, Hardinge," said the Duke, "look sharp and step out the ground. I have no time to waste. Don't stick him up so near the ditch. If I hit him he will tumble in." The signal was given to fire. Noting that his opponent did not level his pistol on the command being given, the Duke purposely fired wide, and an instant afterwards Winchilsea fired in the air. The latter then produced a written sheet which he called an apology, which had to be altered before it met with Wellington's approval. "Good morning, my Lord Winchilsea; good morning, my Lord Falmouth," cried the Duke as he saluted with two fingers, and, mounting his horse, cantered off.

The Duke had a most thankless task during his administration, so much so that we find him writing,

<sup>1</sup> Not at Wimbledon, as Mr Asquith said in a speech at the Guildhall in 1911.



## 244      The Story of Wellington

“ If I had known in January 1828, one tithe of what I do now, and of what I discovered one month after I was in office, I should never have been the King’s Minister, and so have avoided loads of misery. However, I trust God Almighty will soon determine that I have been sufficiently punished for my sins and will relieve me from the unlucky lot which has befallen me. I believe there never was a man who suffered so much for so little purpose.”

He had almost as much trouble with the King as had Pitt with George III, and many of his old supporters were indignant with him over the Relief Bill. Wellington vehemently opposed Parliamentary Reform in the face of public opinion, with the result that his Ministry rode to a fall in November 1830.

Two months before he had taken part in the opening ceremony of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, the first line to cater for passenger traffic in the British Empire. He rode in one of the two trains which made the initial journey, and the fact that they both went in the same direction was the cause of a lamentable accident which deprived one of Wellington’s friends of his life. The incident occurred at Parkside, where the engines stopped to obtain a supply of water. While the trains were at a standstill, Mr Huskisson, formerly President of the Board of Trade, got out of the carriage in which he had been travelling and sought Wellington. A minute or two later the train on the opposite line started. One of the open doors knocked him down, and his right leg was crushed by the locomotive. The Duke and several others ran to the injured man’s assistance, but his injuries were such that he only survived a few hours.

Wellington was succeeded as First Lord of the Treasury by Earl Grey, whose Government was speedily defeated by the Reform Bill which it introduced being rejected by the Lords. Riots broke out in London and the provinces; William IV “ was frightened by



the appearance of the people outside of St James's"; the celebrated Dr Arnold wrote that his "sense of the evils of the times, and to what purpose I am bringing up my children, is overwhelmingly bitter." The King implored the Ministers not to hand in their resignation, the House of Commons carried by a large majority a vote of confidence in the Government, and the nation showed that it bitterly resented the action of the Lords. There was an attempt at compromise, but the concessions were so trivial from Wellington's point of view that he declined to take part in the negotiations. After further angry scenes in the following session Grey resigned on the 9th May 1832. It was during this trying period of our national history that the window-panes of Apsley House were stoned and the Duke's life was threatened.<sup>1</sup>

Once again the King requested Wellington to form a new administration, and several meetings were held with that idea in view, but to no purpose. He had to confess that the task was absolutely impossible: "I felt that my duty to the King required that I should make a great sacrifice of opinion to serve him, and to save his Majesty and the country from what I considered a great evil. Others were not of the same opinion. I failed in performing the service which I intended to perform. . . ." Several resident members of Oxford University, including Professor the Rev. John Keble, impressed by the Duke's devotion, raised funds for the purpose of a bust to commemorate his self-denying conduct. This appreciation of approval greatly pleased Wellington, who announced his intention of sitting for Chantrey, the celebrated sculptor, or whoever else the committee might choose, "with the greatest satisfaction." When Grey resumed office the Reform Bill was read for a third time and passed, a number of peers having declared "that in consequence of the present state of affairs they have come to the resolution

<sup>1</sup> See Foreword.

## 246      The Story of Wellington

of dropping their further opposition to the Reform Bill, so that it may pass without delay as nearly as possible in its present shape." Wellington quietly left the House. He was no more kindly disposed towards the Irish Reform Bill, and subjected it to a fire of criticism which did not, however, preclude it from passing.

One of the most remarkable events of the Duke's crowded life occurred in November 1834. When Earl Grey resigned in July 1834, on which occasion his opponent made a graceful speech to the effect that there had been no personal hostility in his opposition, the retiring statesman recommended Lord Melbourne as his successor. This suggestion met with the King's approval, but the reign of the new Administration lasted only until the middle of the following November. His Majesty sent for Wellington at six in the morning. The latter refused to form a Cabinet, and recommended Sir Robert Peel, who was then in Rome. The Duke promised to carry on the Government during the interim, with the result that he held the offices of First Lord of the Treasury, Home Secretary, Foreign and Colonial Secretary, and Secretary at War for nearly a month. On Peel's return he appointed his industriously Foreign Secretary, a position he held until the following April, when the Government resigned. In 1841, in Peel's second Administration, he occupied a seat in the Cabinet, without office, and in the following year he was created Commander-in-Chief for life by patent under the great seal.

During the Chartist agitation Wellington was asked who was to command the forces in London, where a riot was expected. He answered, "I can name no one except the Duke of Wellington." He organized the arrangements with his usual thoroughness, disposing his troops to keep them out of sight, and taking prompt measures to protect important public buildings. Fortunately the excitement died down, and armed force was not required.

The Duke frequently spent several hours a day at the Horse Guards. "Speaking from the experience which I had of him," says General Sir George Brown, G.C.B., "I should say that the Duke was a remarkably agreeable man to do business with, because of his clear and ready decision. However much I may have seen him irritated and excited, with the subjects which I have repeatedly had to bring under his notice, I have no recollection of his ever having made use of a harsh or discourteous expression to me, or of his having dismissed me without a distinct and explicit answer or decision in the case under consideration. Like all good men of business, who consider well before coming to a decision, his Grace was accustomed to adhere strictly to precedent; to the decisions he may have previously come to on similar cases. This practice greatly facilitated the task of those who had to transact business with him, seeing that all we had to do in concluding our statement of any particular case was to refer to his decision or some similar one."

"Everybody writes to me for everything," he once remarked to Stanhope. "They know the Duke of Wellington is said to be a good-natured man, and so at the least they will get an answer." The Earl, astonished at the amount of the Duke's correspondence, ventured to say that his host might expect to be allowed some rest and recreation while he was at Walmer. "Rest!" cried the Duke. "Every other animal—even a donkey—a costermonger's donkey—is allowed some rest, but the Duke of Wellington never! There is no help for it. As long as I am able to go on, they will put the saddle upon my back and make me go."

Georgiana, Lady De Ros, who was a frequent visitor at Walmer Castle and at Strathfieldsaye, relates an incident which has a direct bearing on this point. "Wellington," she says, "would tell a story against himself sometimes, and amused us all quite in his latter days by the account of various impostures that had



## 248      The Story of Wellington

been practised upon him ; for years he had helped an imaginary officer's daughter, paid for music lessons for her, given her a piano, paid for her wedding trousseau, for her child's funeral, etc., etc. At last it came out that *one man* was the author of these impostures, 'and then,' the Duke said, 'an Officer from the Mendicity Society called on me and gave me such a scolding as I never had before in my life !' "

In a book inscribed as "A Slight Souvenir of the Season 1845-6" we find a delightful little glimpse of "the hero of a hundred fights" as a country gentleman. "What can be a finer sight than to see the Duke of Wellington enter the hunting field?" the author asks. "Not one of those gorgeous spectacles, it is true, such as a coronation, a review, the Lord Mayor's Show, or a procession to the Houses of Parliament—not one of those pompous Continental exhibitions called a *chasse*, where armed menials keep back the crowd, and brass bands proclaim alike the find and finish; but what can be a finer sight—a sight more genial to the mind of a Briton—than the mighty Wellington entering the hunting field with a single attendant, making no more fuss than a country squire? Yet many have seen the sight, and many, we trust, may yet see it. The Duke takes the country sport like a country gentleman—no man less the great man than this greatest of all men; affable to all, his presence adds joy to the scene. The Duke is a true sportsman, and has long been a supporter of the Vine and Sir John Cope's hounds. He kept hounds himself during the Peninsular War, and divers good stories are related of them and their huntsman (Tom Crane), whose enthusiasm used sometimes to carry him in the enemy's country, a fact that he used to be reminded of by a few bullets whizzing about his ears."

Wellington was now the trusted friend of Queen Victoria, who ever held him in the highest esteem. He was one of the first persons, perhaps actually the



first,<sup>1</sup> outside the Royal family and the medical attendants to see the baby who afterwards became Edward VII. According to one account he was met outside Buckingham Palace by Lord Hill, who was informed "All over—fine boy, very fine boy, almost as red as you Hill."

Two days after the first anniversary of the birthday of Edward Albert, Prince of Wales, the Queen and the Prince Consort, accompanied by the Royal children, journeyed to Walmer Castle to pay the Duke a visit. An even greater honour was reserved for the veteran warrior, for on the birth of her Majesty's third son on the 1st May 1850, it got noised abroad that the infant was to be called Arthur, "in compliment to the Hero of Waterloo." The present Duke of Connaught is thus a living link with Wellington. "I must not omit to mention," the Queen writes exactly a year later, "an interesting episode of this day, viz., the visit of the good old Duke on this his eighty-second birthday, to his little godson, our dear little boy. He came to us both at five, and gave him a golden cup and some toys, which he had himself chosen, and Arthur gave him a nosegay."

The day was also that on which the great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was opened. "The Royal party," says Queen Victoria, "were received with continued acclamation as they passed through the Park and round the Exhibition house, and it was also very interesting to witness the cordial greeting given to the Duke of Wellington. I was just behind him and Anglesey [on whose arm he was leaning], during the procession round the building, and he was accompanied by an incessant running fire of applause from the men, and waving of handkerchiefs and kissing of hands from the women, who lined the pathway of the march during the three-quarters of an hour that it took us to march round. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> The point is somewhat obscure owing to conflicting evidence.—See "The Boyhood of a Great King," by A. M. Broadley, pp. 99-100.

## 250      The Story of Wellington

Although the Duke never courted popularity, seemed indeed to shun it and to regard the satisfaction shown by some of his colleagues in the plaudits of the multitude as a sign of weakness, there can be little doubt that he felt a glow of inward pleasure, however slight, when he reflected on the good feeling displayed towards him in the closing years of his long and well-filled life. Apt to be somewhat cynical on occasion, and to think that the times were "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh," he was neither censorious nor vindictive. Nelson preached the gospel of Duty, but Wellington lived it and sacrificed everything to it.

Brougham, as champion of Parliamentary Reform, was an opponent of Wellington, but in middle age he took up an independent position, and has left in his "Historical Sketches of Statesmen who flourished in the Time of George III" a magnificent testimony of the Duke's worth.

"The peculiar characteristic of this great man," he writes, "and which, though far less dazzling than his exalted genius, and his marvellous fortune, is incomparably more useful for the contemplation of the statesman, as well as the moralist, is that constant abnegation of all selfish feelings, that habitual sacrifice of every personal, every party consideration to the single object of strict duty—duty rigorously performed in what station soever he might be called to act. This was ever perceived to be his distinguishing quality; and it was displayed at every period of his public life, and in all matters from the most trifling to the most important."

Regarding the Reform Bill, Brougham says that Wellington's conduct "during the whole of the debates in both sessions upon that measure was exemplary. Opposing it to the utmost of his power, no one could charge him with making the least approach to factious violence, or with ever taking an unfair advantage. . . . After the Bill had passed, the same absence of all factious feelings marked his conduct."

## Wellington the Statesman 251

The Duke's modesty, his good sense, candour and fairness, love of justice, hatred of oppression and fraud are touched upon by Brougham, who closes his brief acknowledgment of his subject's virtues by quoting a remark made by Lord Denman, "the greatest judge of the day." It is that of all Wellington's "great and good qualities, the one which stands first, is his anxious desire ever to see justice done, and the pain he manifestly feels from the sight of injustice."

On the morning of the 14th September 1852 the victor of Waterloo had a paralytic stroke at Walmer Castle. At six o'clock his valet entered the Duke's room to call him, but he complained of not feeling quite well and sent for an apothecary. In the evening he was lying dead on his camp bedstead. We are apt to use the phrase "full of years and honour" rather too glibly perhaps, but it is intensely apposite when applied to the great Duke. He was eighty-three years of age, and as for honour a glance at the following list of distinctions bestowed upon Arthur Wellesley will make the fact self evident :

He was Duke of Wellington, Marquis of Wellington, Earl of Wellington in Somerset, Viscount Wellington of Talavera, Marquis of Douro, Baron Douro of Wellesley, Prince of Waterloo in the Netherlands, Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain, Duke of Bennoy in France, Duke of Vittoria, Marquis of Torres Vedras, Count of Vimiero in Portugal, a Grandee of the First Class in Spain, a Privy Councillor, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, Colonel of the Rifle Brigade, a Field Marshal of Great Britain, a Marshal of Russia, Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands; a Knight of the Garter, the Holy Ghost, the Golden Fleece; a Knight Grand Cross of the Bath and of Hanover, a Knight of the Black Eagle, the Tower and Sword, St Fernando, of William of the Low Countries, Charles III, of the Sword of Sweden, St Andrew of Russia, the Annunciado of



## 252      The Story of Wellington

Sardinia, the Elephant of Denmark, of Maria Theresa, of St George of Russia, of the Crown of Rue of Saxony; a Knight of Fidelity of Baden, of Maximilian Joseph of Bavaria, of St Alexander Newsky of Russia, of St Hermenegilda of Spain, of the Red Eagle of Bradenburg, of St Januarius, of the Golden Lion of Hesse Cassel, of the Lion of Baden; and a Knight of Merit of Würtemberg. In addition, Wellington was Lord High Constable of England, Constable of the Tower and of Dover Castle, Warden, Chancellor and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire and of the Tower Hamlets, Ranger of St James's Park and of Hyde Park, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Commissioner of the Royal Military College, Vice-President of the Scottish Naval and Military Academy, the Master of Trinity House, a Governor of King's College, a Doctor of Laws, and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The motto on Wellington's escutcheon, *Virtutis fortuna comes*—"Fortune is the companion of valour"—was exemplified in his long and eventful career, and perhaps the following words, once used by him in a dispatch, suggest how keen was his sense of responsibility: "God help me if I fail, for no one else will." With true British inconsistency the nation spent £100,000 on the funeral of him whose habits were of Spartan simplicity, but with more appropriateness the body of the Conqueror of Napoleon was placed next to that of the Hero of Trafalgar in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

And so these two great Warriors sleep together. They were worthy of England; may England be worthy of them.



# Index of Proper Names

- Abbé Siéyès, 21  
 Abercromby, General, 30, 47  
 Abrantes, 109, 125  
 d'Abrantès, Duc, 103  
 Acland, General, 90, 91  
 Adam, Sir Frederick, 235  
 Addington, Henry, 65  
 Agraca, Mount, 131  
 Agueda, River, 148, 158, 161, 170  
 Ahmednuggur, 53, 66  
 Aire, 196  
 Alava, General, 171, 172, 173  
 Alba de Tormes, 124, 171, 180, 182  
 Alberche, 112, 117  
 Albergaria, 106  
 Albert, Edward, Prince of Wales, 249  
 Albuera, 152, 153, 154  
 Albuquerque, Duke of, 125  
 Alcaarez, 186  
 Alcobaço, 88, 138  
 Aldea da Ponte, 159  
 Alemtejo, 147, 158  
 Alexander, Emperor, 71, 75  
 Alhandra, 131  
 Alicante, 181  
 Alison, 29, 149  
 Almarez, 120, 170  
 Almeida, 129, 132, 143, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 159, 163, 164, 170, 187  
 Almonacid, 120  
 Alps, the, 210  
 Amarante, Convent of, 107  
 America, North, 207  
 Amiens, Peace of, 68  
 Amotz, 194  
 Amrut Rao, 52  
 Andalusia, 181, 182, 186  
 Angers, 20, 21  
 d'Angoulême, Duc, 196  
 Anselme, 25  
 Anstruther, General, 90  
 Antwerp, 25, 29, 30  
 Antwerp, Cathedral of, 238  
 Apsley House, 245  
 Aragon, 80, 127, 161  
 Areizaga, General, 124, 125  
 Argaum, Battle of, 60, 66  
 Armia, 131  
 Armour, James, 230  
 Arnold, Dr, 245  
 Arzobispo, 120  
 Ascain, 194  
 Assaye, Battle of, 54, 56, 66  
 Asseerghur, Fortress, 57, 66  
 Astorga, 185  
 Asturias, 103, 171, 186  
 Augereau, 199  
 Austerlitz, 18, 69  
 Austria, 101, 127, 237, 241  
 Austrians, the, 24, 25, 26, 29  
 Aviella, River, 140  
 Badajoz, 106, 109, 122, 125, 140, 142, 145, 147, 152, 155, 156, 163, 164, 165, 170, 185  
 Baird, General, 40, 41, 48, 49, 50, 64, 65, 100, 101  
 Baji Rao, 51  
 Balasore, 61  
 Ballasteros, 148, 152, 185  
 Bappoo, Manoo, 58  
 Barcelona, Fortress of, 79  
 Baring, Major, 231  
 Barnard, Colonel, 166  
 Barrington, Sir Jonah, 22, 70

## 254 The Story of Wellington

- Bassein, Subsidiary Treaty of, 51  
 Batavia, Island of, 45, 47, 48  
 Batavia, Expedition to, 65  
 Bathurst, Earl, 201  
 Battersea Fields, 243  
 Bautzen, 187  
 Baylen, 79  
 Bayonne, 160, 190, 195, 200  
 Baztan, 190  
 Beckwith, 144  
 Beere, Harry, 233  
 Belgium, 25, 205, 207, 210  
 Belle Alliance, La, 223  
*Bellerophon*, H.M.S., 235  
 Belvedere, 100  
 Bentinck, Lord William, 192  
 Beresford, Marshal Sir W. C., 104,  
     106, 121, 125, 143, 147, 148, 152,  
     153, 154, 157, 178, 195, 196, 197,  
     198, 202  
 Bessières, 100, 103  
 Bhonsla Rájá of Berar, 51, 53, 54,  
     58, 61  
 Bidarray, 194  
 Bidassoa, River, 192  
 Blake, General, 80, 100, 125, 148,  
     152, 160  
 Blakeney, Robert, 83  
 Blücher, 211, 216, 217, 218, 220, 235,  
     236, 237  
 Boialva, Pass of, 137  
 Boigne, Comtesse de, 201  
 Bombay, 48, 52, 53, 65  
 Bonaparte, Jerome, 221, 226  
 Bonaparte, Joseph, 79, 99, 110, 113,  
     116, 117, 120, 124, 181, 182, 187,  
     190  
 Bonaparte, Letizia, 18  
 Bonnet, 178, 179, 180  
 Bordeaux, 196  
 Bowes, Major-General, 165  
 Boxtel, Village, 30  
 Boyer, 175, 176, 179,  
 Bradford, 173  
 Braganza, House of, 78  
 Braine-le-Comte, 211, 213  
 Brazil, 78  
 Bremen, 31  
 Brienne, 21  
 Brissac, Duc de, 21  
 Brougham, 250  
 Brown, Sir George, 129, 247  
 Bruges, 25  
 Brune, Marshal, 210  
 Brussels, 20, 25, 205, 211, 225  
 Bucellas, 131  
 Bülow, General, 217, 218, 227, 234  
 Burghersh, Lady, 202, 208  
 Burgos, 181, 182, 185, 186, 187  
 Burrampur, 56, 57, 66  
 Burrard, Sir Harry, 87, 90, 91, 93,  
     94, 97, 100  
 Busaco, 134  
 Bylandt, 227  
 Caçadores, the, 105  
 Cadiz, 80, 88, 125, 132, 184, 185  
 Cadogan, Colonel, 188  
 Caffarelli, 182  
 Caillou, Farm, 217  
 Calcutta, 33, 35, 52  
 Cambray, 237  
 Camden, Lord, 33  
 Cameron, Alister, 166  
 Campbell, Captain, 61  
 Canada, 17  
 Canning, 71, 74, 75, 126, 242  
 Cantabrian Hills, 160  
 Carnatic, the, 53  
 Casserbarry Ghaut, 57  
 Castaños, General, 80, 100, 148,  
     152  
 Castilian Mountains, 116  
 Castile, 125, 185  
 Castlereagh, Lord, 22, 23, 64, 70, 87,  
     88, 96, 97, 101, 102, 108, 109, 126,  
     201, 207, 237  
 Catalonia, 80, 103, 127, 190  
 Cathcart, Lord, 68, 72  
 Cawnpore, 52  
 Casal Nova, 142  
 Ceylon, 48  
 Châlons, 24  
 Chantrey, 245  
 Charlemagne, 127  
 Charleroi, 29, 212, 225  
 Charles IV, 79  
 Chasseurs Britanniques, the, 156  
 Château de Montmorency, 238  
 Chateaubriand, 21  
 Chaves, 103

- Chelsea, 19  
 Chelsea Hospital, 97, 182  
 Chesterford, 96  
 Choiseul, Duc de, 17  
 "Christian's Storm," 33  
 Cinco Villas, 143  
 Cintra, Convention of, 94, 96  
 Ciudad Real, 103  
 Ciudad Rodrigo, 123, 124, 128, 132,  
     140, 145, 147, 148, 157, 158, 159,  
     160, 161, 163, 164, 170, 172, 183,  
     185, 187  
 Clausel, 181, 182, 190, 196, 210  
 Clerfait, 29  
 Clinton, 179, 180  
 Clive, Lord, 38, 45  
 Coa, River, 129, 144, 145, 149,  
     159  
 Coalition, Fifth, 209  
 Coburg, 25  
 Coimbra, 86, 125, 133, 137, 139  
 Colborne, Colonel, 195, 198  
 Cole, Major-General, 178  
 Collingwood, Vice-Admiral, 80  
 Colville, Hon. C., 166, 225  
 Comorin, Cape, 48  
 Conahgull, 44  
 Conception, Fort, 150  
 Condé, 26  
 Consuegra, 185  
 Cope, Sir John, 248  
 Copenhagen, 73, 74, 76  
 Cork, 84  
 Cornwallis, Marquis, 69  
 Corsica, Island, 18  
 Cortes, the, 183  
 Coruña, 80, 85, 101, 106  
 Costello, Edward, 104, 110  
 Cotton, Sir Stapleton, 150, 171, 173,  
     196, 202, 220  
 Cox, Colonel, 129  
 Cradock, Sir John, 100  
 Crane, Tom, 248  
 Craufurd, General, 119, 129, 151,  
     163  
 Croker, John Wilson, 55, 85, 171,  
     172  
 Crystal Palace, 249  
 Cuesta, General, 103, 109, 110, 111,  
     112, 119, 120, 121  
 Cuttack, Province, 52, 61  
 Danes, the, 72, 74  
 Dangan Castle, 18  
 Dalrymple, Sir Hew, 87, 94, 95, 97,  
     100  
 D'Archambault, 21  
 Daulat Rao, 51  
 Decaen, Count, 210  
 Deccan, the, 53, 62, 66  
 Delaborde, General, 88, 90  
 Deleytosa, 120, 121, 123  
 Denman, Lord, 251  
 Denmark, 71, 72, 75  
 D'Erlon, 210, 212, 216, 227, 228,  
     232  
 Despeña Perros, Pass of, 125  
 Don Carlos d'España, 152  
 Dorsenne, 158, 159  
 Dos Casas, River, 150  
 Douro, River, 106, 171  
 Douro of Wellesley, Baron, 122  
 Dublin, 18, 69  
 Dumouriez, 25  
 Dundas, Sir David, 31, 97  
 Dungannon, Viscount, 19, 20  
 Dunkirk, 26  
 Dupont, 79, 100  
 Duran, 185  
 Dresden, 190  
 East India Company, 36  
 Ebro, River, 79, 182, 187, 193  
 Edinburgh Castle, 92  
 Edward VII, 249  
 Eguia, 120, 121, 123  
 Egypt, 47, 48  
 Elba, 208  
 Ellichpúr, 58, 60  
 Elvas, 129, 153, 155, 156  
 d'Enghien, Duc, 236  
 England, 21, 25, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73,  
     74, 96, 103, 132, 186, 190, 241, 242,  
     252  
 Essling, Prince of, 127  
 Estremadura, 80, 109, 123, 124, 127,  
     132, 139, 156, 164, 170, 186  
 Eton, 19, 20  
 Europe, 23, 24, 27, 156, 157, 194  
     237, 238, 239  
 Ewart, Serjeant, 228

# 256 The Story of Wellington

- Falmouth, Lord, 243  
 Ferdinand VII, 79, 122, 202, 203, 242  
 Ferguson, 91  
 Ferrol, 80  
 Figueras, Fortress of, 79  
 Finisterre, Cape, 86  
 Flanders, 25, 29, 208  
 Fleurus, Plains of, 29, 113  
 Fontainebleau, Treaty of, 78  
 Forbes, Dr, 168  
 Foy, General, 174, 175, 177, 180, 190, 220  
 Foz d'Aronce, 142  
 France, 24, 26, 27, 71, 94, 101, 113, 128, 194, 195, 239, 240, 241  
 Francis II., Emperor, 208  
 Frasnes, 212, 215  
 Frazer, Mackenzie, 87  
 Freer, 167  
 Freire, Bernardino, 86  
 Freneda, 151, 159, 183  
 Frénilly, Baron de, 99, 208  
 Freyre, General, 197, 198  
 Frischermont, 227  
 Fuente Guinaldo, 158  
 Fuentes de Oñoro, 148, 150, 151  
  
 Gagern, Captain Baron von, 213  
 Gaikwār of Baroda, 51  
 Galicia, 79, 80, 103, 106, 108, 110, 111, 118, 123, 124, 127, 158, 182, 186  
 Gallegos, 164  
 Galluzzo, General, 80  
 Gambier, Admiral, 72  
 Garonne, the, 196  
 Gave de Pau, the, 195  
 Gawilghur, Fort, 60  
 Gémioncourt, Farm of, 215  
 George III, 68, 244, 250  
 George IV, 241, 242  
 Georgiana, Lady De Ros, 247  
 Gérard, 210  
 Germany, 69  
 Ghent, 25  
 Gleig, George Robert, 23, 69, 193  
 Goderich, Lord, 242  
 Godoy, Duke of Alcudia, 78  
 Good Hope, Cape of, 34  
 Gordon, Colonel, 193  
 Graham, Sir Thomas, 186, 191, 192, 202  
 Great Britain, 25, 68, 75, 76, 102, 163, 238, 241, 242  
 Greece, 241  
 Grey, Earl, 244, 245, 246  
 Grouchy, General, 210, 217, 220, 227  
 Guadalaxara, 185  
 Guadiana, the, 103, 164, 165, 169  
 Guareña, 171  
  
 Hal, 225  
 Halkett, 232, 234  
 Hampshire, 241  
 Handel, 19  
 Hanover, 68  
 Hanoverians, the, 25, 26, 226  
 Hardinge, Colonel Sir Henry, 153, 243  
 Harris, General, 38, 39, 40  
 Hastings, 69  
 Herrasti, Governor, 128  
 Hessians, the, 25, 26  
 Hill, Lord, 104, 125, 130, 134, 158, 170, 182, 186, 187, 190, 192, 195, 196, 199, 201, 202, 211, 249  
 Hockrill, 96  
 Holkar of Indore, 51, 52, 62  
 Holland, 25, 29, 30, 53, 205, 207  
 Holy Roman Empire, 24, 25, 28  
 Hood, 27  
 Hope, Sir John, 195, 200, 201, 202  
 Hope, the Hon. J., 87  
 Hostalrich, 127  
 Houchard, General, 26  
 Hougoumont, 221, 225, 226, 232, 234  
 Houssaye, 220  
 Houston, Major-General, 150, 151  
 Huebra, River, 164, 183  
 Hughes, 20  
 Hungary, 49  
 Huskisson, Mr, 244  
 Hyde Park, 226  
 Hyder Ali, 36  
 Hyderabad, 38, 53, 66  
  
 Iberian Peninsula, 78, 127  
 Imperialists, the, 25, 29  
 India, 17, 66, 69, 70, 71



Indore, 53  
 Inglis, Colonel, 153  
 Inniskillings, the, 228  
 Ireland, 18, 22, 70, 71, 76  
 Irish Reform Bill, 246  
 Isle of Wight, 103

Jackson, Mr F. J., 72  
 Jaraicejo, 120, 121  
 Jaucourt, Marquis de, 21  
 Jemappes, 25  
 Jena, Bridge of, 237  
 Jerome, 221  
 Jesuits, the, 17  
 Jeswant Rao, 51  
 John, King, 21  
 Joseph, 79, 99, 110, 113, 116, 117,  
 120, 124, 181, 182, 187, 190  
 Jourdan, Marshal, 26, 29, 113, 115,  
 190  
 Junot, General, 78, 79, 81, 88, 90,  
 94, 96, 100  
 Jura Mountains, the, 210

Keble, John, 245  
 Kellermann, Marshal, 103, 120  
 Kempt, Sir James, 228  
 Kennedy, Captain Clark, 228,  
 Kennedy, Sir Robert, 201  
 Kincaid, 148  
 Kiöge, Battle of, 74  
 Kléber, 128  
 Kray, General, 49

Labada, 60  
 La Carolina, 103, 120  
 La Haye, 225, 235  
 La Haye Sainte, 222, 225, 227, 231,  
 234  
 Lake, General, 52, 53  
 La Mancha, 120, 123, 124  
 Lamego, 106  
 Landrecy, 237  
 Langlands, Lieutenant, 60  
 Lannes, Marshal, 128  
 Lanz, the, 191  
 Lapisse, 116  
 La Romana, Marquis, 100, 103, 123,  
 132, 139

## R

La Trinidad, 166  
 La Vendée, 26, 209  
 Le Courbe, 210  
 Lefebvre, Marshal, 100  
 Lefebvre-Desnoëttes, General, 212  
 Leiria, 88  
 Leith, General, 134, 166, 173, 177  
 Le Marchant, General, 175, 176, 177,  
 180  
 Lennox, Lord William, 226  
 Leon, 80, 160  
 Lerida, 127  
 Lesaca, 192  
 Ligny, 212, 214, 216  
 Lion Mound, 220  
 Lisbon, 78, 88, 90, 91, 100, 101, 103,  
 104, 105, 119, 123, 128, 130, 131,  
 132, 183  
 Liverpool, Earl of, 125, 126, 138, 142,  
 154, 155, 157, 185  
 Lobau, General, 210, 234  
 Loison, General, 88, 90, 143  
 London, 17, 80, 236  
 Longford, Baron, 23  
 Los Aripelles, 171, 175, 178, 179  
 Los Santos, 103  
 Louis XV, 17  
 Louis XVIII, 21, 196, 199, 200, 208,  
 237, 240  
 Lourinhão, 91  
 Lützen, 187  
 Lyons, 26, 27

Mack, General, 29, 69  
 Mackay, Piper, 92  
 Mackie, 176  
 Mackinnon, Major-General, 163  
 Madras, 35, 52  
 Madrid, 79, 101, 109, 111, 118,  
 124, 160, 181, 182, 185, 186, 187,  
 202  
 Maes, the, 29  
 Maestricht, 25  
 Mafra, 131  
 Maitland, Captain Frederick Lewis,  
 235  
 Maitland, General Sir Peregrine, 215  
 Malavelly, 39  
 Malcolm, Sir John, 49  
 Malines, 25, 29

## 258 The Story of Wellington

- Malpurda, River, 44  
 Manila, 35  
 March, Lord, 169  
 Marchand, Jean Gabriel, Comte, 124  
 Marhattás, the, 51, 53, 54, 56  
 Marion Street, 18  
 Marmont, Marshal, 152, 156, 158,  
 159, 162, 163, 170, 171, 172, 173,  
 175, 181  
 Masséna, Marshal, 127, 128, 129,  
 130, 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 143,  
 145, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152  
 Maubenge, 26, 27, 237  
 Mauritius, 47  
 Maxwell, Colonel, 55  
 Maxwell, Sir Herbert, 50, 97  
 Mayence, 26  
 Meath, County, 22  
 Medellín, 103, 109  
 Medina de Rio Seco, 85  
 Meer Allum, 42  
 Melbourne, Lord, 246  
 Mequinenza, Castle of, 127  
 Merbe Braine, 225  
 Merida, 122  
 Metternich, Prince, 207, 208  
 Metz, 27  
 McGregor, Dr James, 168  
 Middlesex, 17  
 Milhaud, 232  
 Mina, General, 160  
 M'Laine, Major, 234  
 M'Leod, Colonel, 167, 168  
 Moira, Lord, 28, 29, 97  
 Monasterio, 103  
 Moncey, Marshal, 81, 100  
 Mondego, River, 123, 125, 132, 137  
 Mons, 25  
 Mont St Jean, 217, 222, 225  
 Montbrun, 151  
 Montealegre, 108  
 Montechique, 131  
 Montesquiou, 25  
 Moore, Sir John, 75, 81, 87, 90, 94,  
 100, 101, 109  
 Moreau, General, 128  
 Mornington, Baron, 19  
 Mornington, Countess of, 18, 20  
 Mornington, Earl of, 19, 33, 34, 35,  
 36, 39, 64, 65  
 Mornington House, 18  
 Mortago, 134  
 Mortier, Marshal, 100, 103, 119, 120,  
 123  
 M'Quade, Serjeant Robert, 129  
 Munro, Sir Thomas, 45  
 Murat, Marshal, 79, 99, 209  
 Murcia, 80  
 Murray, Lieutenant-Colonel George,  
 74  
 Murray, General Sir John, 107, 192  
 Mysore, Presidency of, 36, 38, 42, 43,  
 50, 52  
 Namur, 25, 218  
 Napier, Major Sir George, 73, 83,  
 121, 163, 196  
 Naples, 25, 79, 209, 241  
 Napoleon, 18, 20, 21, 24, 27, 38, 46,  
 47, 71, 78, 79, 80, 81, 94, 101,  
 106, 121, 125, 127, 130, 131, 133,  
 158, 199, 201, 202, 208, 217, 218,  
 224, 225, 227, 229, 234, 235, 236  
 Napoleon, Fort, 170  
 Nassauers, the, 226  
 Nava d'Aver, 150  
 Naval Moral, 120  
 Navarre, 160  
 Neerwinden, 25  
 Nelson, 22, 69, 80, 250, 252  
 Nesselrode, 237  
 Ney, Marshal, 100, 101, 103, 110, 119,  
 120, 129, 134, 135, 208, 212, 214,  
 216, 217, 234  
 Nice, 25  
 Nicholas, Emperor, 242  
 Nive, River, 195  
 Nivelles, 213, 225  
 Nizám of Hyderabad, the, 36, 38,  
 39, 43, 52, 57, 66  
 Nuestra Señora de la Peña, 171, 172  
 Obidos, 88  
 Ocaña, Battle of, 124  
 O'Donnell, 127  
 Ohain, 234  
 O'Hare, Captain, 167  
 Old Castile, 80, 123  
 Oman, Professor, 88, 109, 159, 222  
 Oporto, 86, 101, 103, 106, 108, 130  
 134, 142, 147

- Orange, Prince of, 29, 30, 166, 211, 213, 214, 215, 225  
 Orcain, 191  
 Ordal, 193  
 Orense, 108  
 Oropesa, 110, 120  
 Orthez, 195  
 Ostend, 25, 29  
 O'Toole, Colonel, 162  
 Oude, 70  
 Oxford University, 245  
  
 Pack, General, 162, 174, 178, 179, 228  
 Paget, Sir E., 87, 107  
 Pakenham, Major-General, 173, 174, 175, 176  
 Pakenham, Hon. Catherine, 23, 69  
 Palafox, General, 80, 100  
 Pampeluna, Fortress of, 79, 190, 191, 194  
 Papelotte, 225, 235  
 Paris, 24, 101, 202, 235, 237  
 Parkside, 244  
 Parque, Duque del, 123, 124  
 Pasquier, Duc de, 128  
 Pau, 195  
 Peel, Sir Robert, 246  
 Penafiel, 108  
 Penang, 35  
 Perar, 66  
 Perceval, Spencer, 126  
 Pero Negro, 131  
 Perron, 51  
 Perwez, 218  
 Peshwá of Poona, the, 43, 51, 53, 57, 65  
 Philippine Islands, 35  
 Philippon, General, 165, 169  
 Pichegru, General, 29, 30, 128  
 Picton, General, 134, 162, 166, 169, 195, 198, 215, 229  
 Picurina, Fort, 165, 166  
 Piedmont, 241  
 Fignerol, Marquis of, 21  
 Pirch, 218  
 Pitt, William, the Younger, 22, 28, 244  
 Planchenoit, 234  
 Plasencia, Vera de, 111, 119, 120, 157  
 Poço Velho, 150  
  
 Poland, 25, 28, 207  
 Pole, Miss, 202  
 Pombal, 142  
 Ponsonby, Major-General Sir William, 228, 229, 230  
 Pont-à-chin, 29  
 Poona, 51, 65  
 Popham, Sir Home, 74, 185  
 Porlier, 160  
 Portland, Duke of, 70  
 Portugal, 25, 71, 72, 76, 84, 94, 95, 100, 102, 103, 104, 106, 111, 114, 118, 121, 123, 126, 127, 129, 146, 148, 152, 157, 163  
 Praslin, Duc de, 21  
 Prince Consort, 249  
 Prussia, 24, 25, 28, 29, 71, 237, 241  
 Prussians, the, 24, 26, 227, 238  
 Puerto de Baños, 120  
 Puerto del Rey, Pass of, 125  
 Pyrenees, the, 100, 187, 190, 193, 210  
  
 Quatre Bras, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217  
 Quesnoy, 237  
 Quinta de Granicha, 155  
 Quinta de St João, 156  
 Quintella, 131  
  
 Ragusa, Fort, 170  
 Rainier, Admiral, 45  
 Ramsay, Captain Norman, 150  
 Rao, Amrut, 52  
 Rapoula de Coa, 143  
 Rapp, Count, 210  
 Reding, General, 80  
 Redinha, 142  
 Red Sea, 50  
 Reille, 196, 210, 212, 214  
 Reynier, General, 134, 144  
 Rhine, the, 26, 27, 28, 210, 240  
 Richmond, Duchess of, 212  
 Richmond, Duke of, 70, 161  
 Ridge, Lieutenant-Colonel, 168  
 Rio Mayor, River, 140  
 Rivillas, River, 165  
 Roberts, Earl, 31, 66  
 Robinson, 242  
 Rocca, Captain M. de, 112, 133, 134  
 Roliça, 88, 89, 97

## 260 The Story of Wellington

- Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 243,  
     244  
 Rome, 127, 246  
 Rose, Dr J. Holland, 74, 220, 239  
 Roskilde, 73  
 Ross, Major-General Robert, 191  
 Ross-Lewin, Major, 92  
 Rubens, 238  
 Ruffin, Count, 116  
 Runa, Ravine of, 131  
 Russia, 25, 71, 75, 241  
 Rye, 69  
  
 Sabugal, 143, 149, 150, 159  
 Sagunto, Battle of, 160  
 Sahagun, 101  
 Salamanca, 100, 103, 120, 124, 145,  
     148, 159, 163, 170, 171, 181, 182,  
     183, 185  
 Salamonde, 108  
 San Antonio de Cantaro, 133  
 Sanchez, Don Julian, 150, 151, 160  
 San Christoval, Fort of, 155, 169,  
     170  
 San Francisco, 161  
 San Juan, General, 80  
 San Marcial, 192  
 San Sebastian, Fortress of, 79, 190,  
     191  
 Santa Cruz, 161  
 Santa Maria, 166  
 Santander, 186  
 Santarem, 140, 141  
 San Vincente, 166, 169  
 Sardinia, 25  
 Savanore, 43  
 Savary, General, 190  
 Savoy, 25  
 Sax-Weimar, Prince Bernard of, 212  
 Scheldt, 29  
 Schwartzenberg, Prince, 29  
 Scindia, 66  
 Sebastiani, General, 103, 106, 110,  
     115, 116, 117, 119, 120  
 Sedasser, 39  
 Segovia, 183  
 Seringapatam, 38, 39, 40, 42, 49,  
     50  
 Serra, the, 107, 135  
 Sersooly, 58  
 Seton, 176  
  
 Seven Years' War, the, 17  
 Seville, 106, 109, 125, 147, 157, 170,  
     185  
 Shaw, Colonel, 40  
 Sherbrooke, General, 40  
 Sherer, Captain, 62  
 Shore, Sir John, 35  
 Sierra Catalina, 108  
 Sierra de Busaco, 133  
 Sierra Morena, 103, 124, 125  
 Simon, General, 133  
 Sindhia of Gwalior, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56,  
     58, 59  
 S. Lourenço, River, 132  
 Smith, Robert, 19, 20  
 Smith, Sir Harry, 81, 130, 166, 167,  
     223  
 Smith, Sydney, 19  
 Soignes, Forest of, 225  
 Somerset, Lord Edward, 196, 232  
 Sorauren, 191  
 Souars, 195  
 Souham, 182, 183  
 Soult, Marshal, 101, 103, 106, 107,  
     108, 110, 118, 119, 120, 123, 125,  
     140, 147, 156, 170, 181, 182, 191,  
     192, 195, 196, 197, 199, 200, 210,  
     227  
 Southampton, 33  
 Spain, 23, 25, 71, 78, 79, 95, 99, 100,  
     102, 104, 127, 160, 190  
 Spencer, General Sir Brent, 87, 147,  
     148  
 Spry, 179  
 St Amand, 214  
 Stanhope, 247  
 St Cyr, General, 81, 100, 103  
 Stevenson, Colonel, 52, 54, 57, 58,  
     60  
 Stewart, General Sir Charles, 108,  
     138, 149, 201  
 Stewart, Major-General the Hon. W.,  
     125  
 St Jean de Luz, 194  
 St Jean Pied de Port, 194  
 St Julian, Fort of, 132  
 St Ledger, General, 35  
 St Peter's, Dublin, 18  
 Strangford, Lord, 78, 241  
 Strathfieldsaye, 241, 247  
 Stuart, General, 39



- Styles, Corporal, 229  
 Suchet, Marshal, 127, 157, 181, 190, 199, 200, 210  
 Surat, 52  
 Sweden, 71, 75  
  
 Taggart, Lieutenant, 167  
 Tagus, the, 106, 110, 112, 119, 123, 124, 125, 131, 132, 140, 157, 159, 170, 185  
 Talavera, 109, 111, 112, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 157, 191  
 Talleyrand, 21  
 Tamames, 124  
 Tarragona, 157, 192, 193  
 Thielmann, General, 218  
 Thomière, 172, 173  
 Tilsit, Peace of, 71, 75  
 Tipú Sultan, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 65  
 Toledo, 120, 183  
 Tordesillas, 171  
 Toro, 171  
 Torrecilla de la Orden, 171  
 Torres Vedras, 91, 123, 130, 131, 133, 139  
 Toulon, 26, 27  
 Toulouse, 195, 196, 199, 200  
 Tournay, 25, 29  
 Trafalgar, 69, 80, 201  
 Trant, Colonel, 139, 143  
 Tras os Montes, Province of, 86  
 Trim, 22  
 Trincomalee, 48  
 Troisville, 29  
 Tudela, 171  
 Turkey, 241  
 Turones, River, 150, 151  
  
 Ulm, 69  
 Uxbridge, Earl of, 225, 232  
  
 Valencia, 80, 161, 181, 190  
 Valenciennes, 26, 237  
 Valladolid, 103, 120, 127, 163, 182, 183, 185, 186, 187  
 Vallée, 105  
 Valmy, 24  
 Vandal, Count, 74  
 Vandamme, General, 210  
 Vandeleur, 229  
  
 Vedras, 91  
 Velasquez, 189  
 Veldbeck, 73  
 Vellore, 53  
 Vendas Novas, 106  
 Venegas, General, 103, 110, 111, 118, 120  
 Verona, 241  
 Victor, General, 81, 100, 103, 106, 109, 110, 111, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 124  
 Victoria, Queen, 248  
 Vienna, Congress of, 206, 207  
 Villa Franca, 193  
 Villatte, 116  
 Villiers, Rt. Hon. John, 126  
 Vimiero, 90, 91, 92, 94, 97, 98  
 Vincennes, 236  
 Viseu, 126  
 Vittoria, 187, 189, 190  
 Vives, General, 80, 100  
 Vouga, River, 106  
  
 Walcheren, Expedition, 126  
 Walker, General, 169  
 Wallace, Lieutenant-Colonel, 174, 175, 176  
 Walmer Castle, 171, 247, 248, 249, 251  
 Warre, Sir William, 92  
 Waterloo, 18, 19, 111, 217, 223, 235  
 Waterloo, Prince of, 241  
 Waters, Colonel, 107  
 Wattignies, 26  
 Waugh, Dhoondia, 43, 44, 45, 47  
 Wavre, 217, 218, 220  
 Webster, Lieutenant, 213  
 Wellesley, Henry, 48, 70  
 Wellesley, Lord, 19  
 Wellesley, Richard, 22, 28  
 Wellington of Talavera, Viscount, 122  
 Wesley, Garret, 19  
 West India Islands, 156  
 Westleys, 19  
 West Meath, 18  
 Westmorland, Lord, 22, 28  
 Wilkes, John, 17  
 William IV, 244  
 Wilson, Sir Robert, 73, 101, 120, 123, 143

## 262 The Story of Wellington

Winchilsea, Earl of, 243

Windham, 96

Yeltes, the, 164

York, Duke of, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31,  
92, 242

Zamora, 187

Zaragoza, 103

Zibreira, 131

Ziethen, General, 211, 212, 218, 234,

235

Zizandre, River, 131









